

Examination of Early Childhood Teachers' Techniques to Recognize and Assess the Child Before and During the Distance Education

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to examine the recognition and assessment techniques employed by early childhood teachers both prior to and following the pandemic, utilizing a fundamental qualitative research methodology. 17 early childhood teachers participated in the study using a semi-structured interview form. The study's conclusions are arranged according to several themes. The methods early childhood teachers employ to recognize and assess the child during in-person instruction is the first of these themes. During face-to-face education, teachers used various techniques to get to recognize and assess children, including observation, developmental observation forms, developmental reports, warm-up games, drawing, working with families, anecdotes, sociometry, and portfolio work. However, through the pandemic, it was observed that they started using techniques such as interviews, post-activities assessment, observation, and teacher cooperation. The sudden switch to online education-assessment techniques in the distance education process has resulted in unanticipated challenges and situations for the early childhood teachers as they attempt to implement the teaching process. In this context, inclusive training can be provided to teachers on how to get to know and assess children, covering various situations comprehensively.

Keywords: early childhood; teachers; distance education; recognizing; assessment.

About the Article

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Introduction

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic process, millions of students and teachers have initiated the process of distance learning (Aktan Acar et al., 2021). Along with the teaching process, teachers also need to explore novel methods to evaluate the children's learning process. Burgess and Sievertsen (2020) stated that during this educational process, assessments were carried out with some uncertainties and in various ways, which contributed to increased complexity in education. Consequently, the contentious digital and online evaluation techniques for young children have been rigorously scrutinized during this one-of-a-kind period of early childhood distance education. Early childhood teachers have been involved in this nascent experience and practice of employing online assessment methods for young children, lacking adequate training or preparation for online education. As anticipated, these teachers may have encountered numerous challenges, issues, and barriers during this unforeseen experiment. Naturally and predictably, these teachers might have run across numerous challenges, issues, and barriers during this unforeseen experiment. In a study conducted by Akşin Yavuz (2022), it was determined that early childhood teachers conducting online live lessons during distance education mostly did not evaluate the activities they implemented in these live sessions. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2004) delineates the rationale for assessing young children in educational settings. Education of children is to make sound decisions for the teaching process, to early intervention be able to recognize children in need and identify special situations and assist program development with educational and developmental interventions is to be. The assessment process is one of the most important components of the learning process, serving as a pivotal evaluation method within education. The assessment findings can serve as a reference point to ascertain the achievement of the curriculum's stated learning objective. The assessment findings can serve as a reference point to ascertain the achievement of the curriculum's stated learning objective. In this context, assessment is also used to measure the extent to which learning objectives have been met. Although each measurement tool serves a distinct purpose, they all fundamentally aim to support the child's development in all aspects (Mindes, 2003). Early childhood is a critical period requiring guidance and direction for self-development, necessitating methods to provide developmental stimulation to identify relevant evaluations (Widat et al., 2022).

The pandemic posed several challenges for teachers who were inadequately prepared for remote teaching, including deficiencies in pre- and in-service trainings to meet the educational needs of young children from a distance, unpreparedness for transitioning from in-person to remote teaching, and the requirement to collaborate with other teachers and partners who sometimes lacked the necessary skills to support them (Chroust et al., 2023). During the pandemic, within the context of distance education, teaching techniques and the methods employed by teachers to recognize and assess children underwent significant changes. One of the researches indicates that there is limited understanding of how teachers evaluate what children already know and can do with technology and it involves early childhood teachers analyzing how teachers assess

young children's technological learning. The study demonstrates a widespread lack of teacher understanding of assessment procedures and assessment data, hindering early childhood programs' ability to accurately monitor the technological progress of young children. The most efficient methods for early childhood teachers to acquire and evaluate data related to technology are proposed (Ntuli, & Kyei-Blankson, 2012). When examining the early childhood education stage, it is seen that informal methods are predominantly utilized in natural settings. Moreover, early childhood teachers employ an alternative assessment technique that encourages active child participation and utilizes a variety of tools such play-based or program-based, dynamic, and portfolio assessments. These assessment techniques depict the development and learning processes as encompassing both outcomes and ongoing learning (Riley et al., 2016). Additionally, one research finding indicates that a majority of teachers frequently employ observation forms and similar methods and many of early childhood teachers' competencies in recognizing and assessing children are average or below average (Banerjee and Luckner, 2013). It was also found that the limited assessment methods preferred and the lack of knowledge about evaluation were evident in the child assessment practices of the teachers (Işikoğlu Erdoğan et al., 2021).

A computerized assessment system has been implemented to track, evaluate, guide, and foster the development of young children in alignment with the goals and topics outlined in the Ministry of National Education Vision (MEB, 2018). Therefore, it is acknowledged that our nation is conducting assessments, monitoring, and providing support tailored to each child's unique qualities, interests and developmental levels, which are increasingly crucial in the 21st-century. Furthermore, the use of digital assessment tools in education as a means of assessment have been highlighted within the context of the ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) criteria for 21st-century skills. Delivering the assessment was challenging, but more importantly, both are necessary for effective education. In the study conducted by Balaman and Hanbay Tiryaki (2021), it was observed that teachers faced challenges in assessment during the Covid-19 period and that there was a need for in-service training programs for teachers. In their specific investigation of assessment techniques for digital competence in education, Sillat et al. (2021) found that assessment tools are predominant, yet proper assessment approaches are not well guided. Due to its frequent quantitative usage, it is now imperative to investigate the effectiveness of its qualitative application. Therefore, the crucial question is whether employing online assessment techniques to analyze children's performance is as beneficial as using the more traditional forms that educational institutions have long employed (Beringuela, 2009). Ali and others (2021) state that the implementation of online assessment has brought several challenges, with a primary concern being the adaptation to using internet resources that diverge from traditional educational practices. Another argument is that technology and online tools are being adopted too belatedly, and had they been utilized earlier, this process would have been modernized and revolutionized, thereby facilitating their current ease of use. Using digital assessment tools in early childhood education settings in light of the digitalization trend indicate that early childhood teachers have difficulty effectively incorporating child-centered

pedagogy, including digital portfolios and such assessment techniques into their curricula (Alanko et al., 2019). As a result, it is believed that teachers faced difficulties in recognizing and assessing children using technological tools during the transition to distance education in the pandemic period. In the literature, there are many researches that examine the assessment methods and instruments of early childhood teachers (Akman et al., 2022; Brown & Rolfe, 2005; Kaya, 2018; Kwi-Ok & Jung-In, 2011; Pretti-Frontczak et al., 2002; Pyle & DeLuca, 2017; Yılmaz Topuz & Erbil Kaya, 2016). In a related study, data were collected from early childhood teachers through questionnaires. It was found that the teachers perceived themselves as competent in using child recognition and assessment methods. They predominantly employed observation and interview techniques, yet some did not adequately respond to questions on developmental assessment tests, leaving answers incomplete (Taner, 2005).

A review of the literature reveals studies where teachers have employed authentic assessment methods, such as observation, interviews, portfolios, play, and checklists, during face-to-face education. The developmental report and the play are not used as assessment method in distance education period (Akman et al., 2022). In early childhood education, documentation is commonly viewed as a tool to improve the standard of care and instruction as well as a technique to consider the viewpoint of the child. There are various formats for techniques to recognize and assess the child, recording and paying attention to the children, assessment and documentation dilemmas, and increase the children's involvement during the process (Alasutari et al., 2014). Providing the teacher and the learning process with the most suitable time, location, and circumstances is never easy. This is because it should incorporate teaching and learning principles that cover a wide range of topics, including the choice of teaching strategies, the learning environment, the instructional materials, and one of them is assessment (Hartatik, & Fulka Bia'yuni, 2020). These studies have explored assessment techniques of the teachers in the early childhood period. All these studies show that early childhood teachers know different assessment techniques, but they cannot use all these techniques to assess children in the distance education process and they need to make changes. Recognizing and promoting children's growth requires a thorough understanding of and assessment of them. Teachers can facilitate the growth of areas that need support by conducting systematic assessments to determine the developmental stages, interests, and areas of strength of the children. Through assessment activities, teachers can examine the success of their plans and methods of instruction and make appropriate adjustments. Considering this, assessment in the classroom is crucial in both in-person and virtual learning environments.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, sudden shift to online education and assessment procedures has introduced new and unexpected situations and challenges to the educational process and the implementations by the teachers. Under such unforeseen circumstances, it is imperative to examine the strategies employed by early childhood teachers to recognize and assess the children in this period. Furthermore, it is of paramount theoretical importance to understand teachers' assessment techniques concerning young children's online learning during the Covid-19 lockdown, as it

pertains to innovative educational approaches. Therefore, this unprecedented situation has provided context for investigating teachers' views and practices regarding the assessment of children during the period of distance education.

This study aims to address the following research questions;

- What were the children recognizing and assessment techniques of the early childhood teachers before the pandemic (Before March 2020)?
- What were the children recognizing and assessment techniques of the early childhood teachers during the pandemic (March 2020-September 2021)?
- What are the suggestions of early childhood teachers regarding the recognition and assessment of children during distance education?

Method

Research Design

This study was designed as a basic qualitative research method to determine what were the child recognizing and assessment techniques of the early childhood teachers used before and the during the pandemic. Qualitative research involves the process of realistically and comprehensively portraying events within their natural settings, utilizing data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

Purposeful sampling method was used to determine the participants, employing criterion sampling. Criterion sampling is used to identify specific situations, objects, or events that meet predetermined criteria (Gall et al., 2007). In this context, the criteria for participation included actively serving as an early childhood teacher both before and during the pandemic and after the pandemic, as well as conducting distance education during the pandemic. Based on these criteria, 17 early childhood teachers from independent kindergartens voluntarily participated in the study. All the teachers participating in the study are women. While the average age of 17 teachers is 31; the average professional seniority is around nine years.

Data Collection and Analysis

To gain a deeper knowledge of early childhood teachers' views, and practices throughout their assessment techniques, as well as teachers' in-practice experiences in early childhood education settings, all qualitative data are gathered through individual interviews. Following the literature and gathering opinions two expert from the department of early childhood education, a semi-structured interview form was developed. Semi-structured interviewing is a technique where the sequence and structure of questions asked during the interview can be altered by the interviewer, and details on

specific topics can be explored (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Some of the questions from the 12-question interview form are as follow:

- What comes to mind when you think about recognizing and assessing a child?
- What kinds of activities did you conduct to recognize and assess children before the pandemic?
- What kind of activities did you conduct to recognize and assess children during the distance education process necessitated the pandemic?
- What alternative methods and techniques could you have employed during the distance education process?
- Did you collaborate with families in recognizing and assessing children during the remote education process? If so, how?

Before data collection, two pilot interviews were conducted with teachers and it was seen that questions were relevant and comprehensible. Following the pilot process, the interviews were conducted between May and June 2022. All interviews were held face-to-face in a quiet environment at the teachers' schools by one of the researchers. The interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes for each teacher. The data were recorded using a voice recorder. Informed consent was obtained from all participating teachers prior to data collection.

Descriptive analysis technique was used to analyse the data of the study. The data obtained from the research were analysed in four different stages. The first stage of the process is the coding of the data. At this stage, the researchers analysed the data they collected and divided them into meaningful segments and aimed to determine which concept each segment represented. The second stage is the determination of categories and themes. At this stage, the codes were used to identify general themes that could describe the data set at a broader level and to group the codes under specific categories. The third stage of the analysis involved organising the data according to the codes, categories and themes previously identified. In addition, the fourth and final stage of the analysis involved attributing meaning to the collected data, explaining the relationships between the findings, establishing cause-effect relationships, drawing conclusions from the findings and making explanations about the importance of the results obtained.

Ethical Issues and Trustworthiness

In this study, the researchers followed a series of ethical principles from the beginning to the end of the study. First, before the collection of the research data, research permission was obtained from the İstanbul Kültür University Ethics Committee with the decision numbered 2022/59. Before the interviews were conducted, the purpose and content of the study were explained to the participants and their verbal and written consents were obtained separately for both participation in the study and voice recording on a voluntary basis. Their verbal consent was obtained during the voice recording and their written consent was obtained through the Informed Consent Form. At the approval stage,

participants were informed about their rights to 'freedom of withdrawal', 'confidentiality', 'anonymity' and 'privacy' (Creswell, 2013).

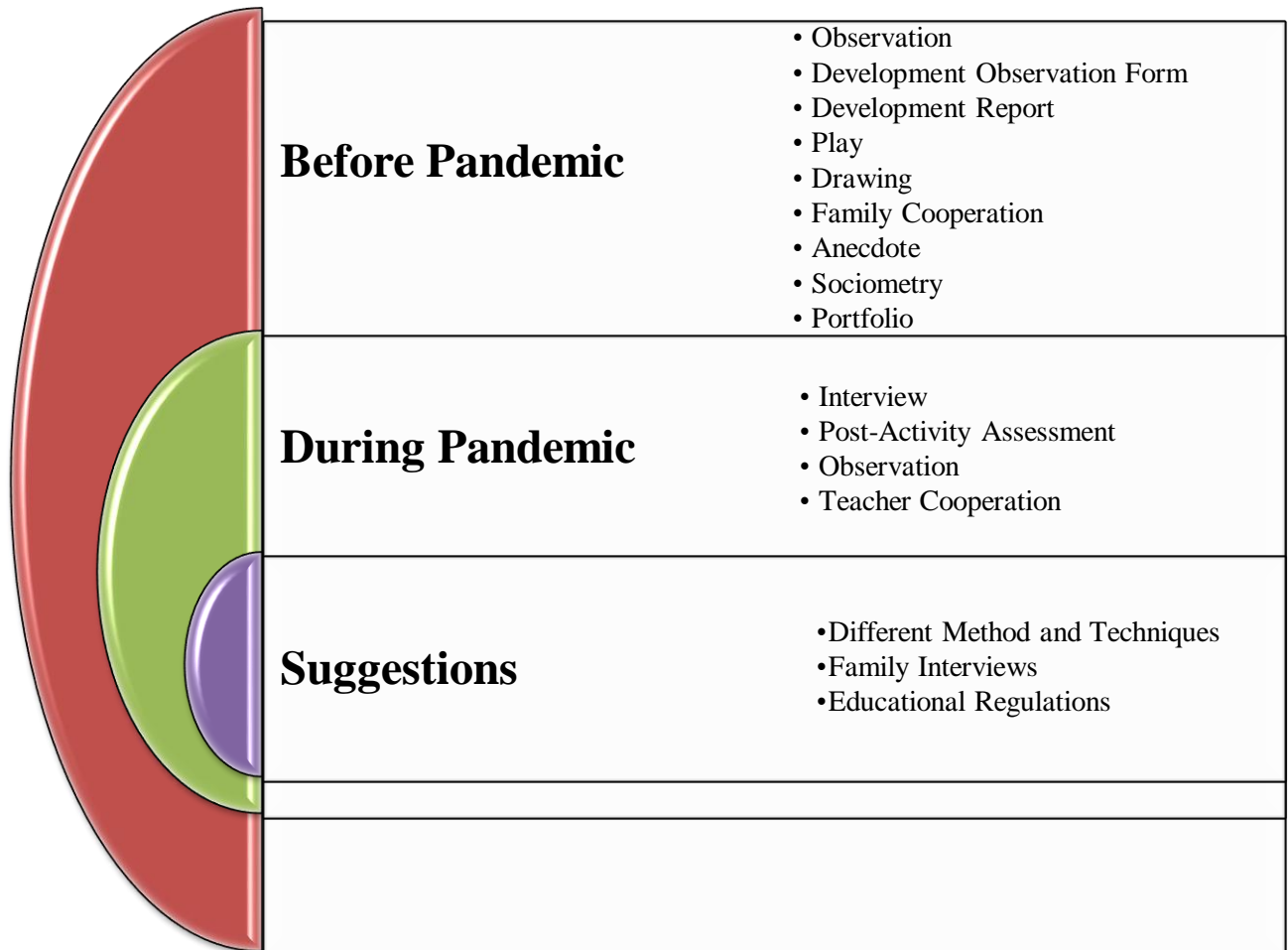
To increase the credibility of the study, data collection started after the research permission was obtained. Before the data collection, the researchers conducted a literature review and created a semi-structured interview form; the interview form was finalised after expert opinions and pilot applications. After the research data were collected, the audio recordings were listened to and transcribed without any changes. In the data analysis phase, the principle of 'consensus among coders' was adopted. In this context, firstly, two transcripts were coded together by two researchers and then presented to the other researchers for their opinions. After all researchers agreed on the first two transcripts, two researchers analysed all the transcripts together and the process was finalised after all researchers gave their opinions on the final version. On the other hand, the fact that one of the researchers who conducted the first analysis phase of the research conducted his own master's and doctoral theses with qualitative methodology and taught qualitative research course at postgraduate level can be considered as the principle of 'long-term participation' from the credibility principles. Finally, another principle, the principle of 'rich and intensive description' enabled the readers to decide on the transferability.

Findings

The aim of the study is to examine the techniques utilized by early childhood teachers in recognizing and assessing children during distance education. The findings of the study are presented under specific themes. The first of these themes is the techniques used by early childhood teachers to get to recognize and assess the child during face-to-face education before the pandemic. When examining the techniques employed by teachers before pandemic during face-to-face education to get to recognize and assess the child, it is observed that they engage in activities such as observation, developmental observation forms, developmental reports, warm-up games, drawing, collaboration with families, anecdotes, sociometry, and portfolio work. When indicated the other theme during pandemic, teachers interview, conduct post-activity assessment, observation and teacher cooperation. Considering recognition and assess techniques, teachers suggest using different methods and techniques, family interviews and educational regulations to assess the children. The findings obtained are presented in this section. The data has been analysed, and it is supported by direct quotations from the participants.

Figure 1. presents the findings regarding the techniques employed by teachers in getting to recognize and assess the child before and during pandemic.

Figure 1. The techniques used by early childhood teachers in getting to recognize and assessing the child before pandemic and during pandemic.



The Techniques Used in Recognizing and Assessing the Child Before Pandemic

The findings of the study are presented under specific themes. The first of these themes is the techniques used by early childhood teachers to get to recognize and assess the child during face-to-face education before the pandemic. When examining the techniques employed by teachers before pandemic to get to recognize and assess the child, it is observed that they engage in activities such as observation, development observation forms, development reports, warm-up games, drawing, collaboration with families, anecdotes, sociometry, and portfolio work. Examples of raw data related to these subthemes are provided below.

Upon examining the expressions regarding the techniques used by teachers to get to recognize and assess the child during face-to-face education before pandemic, most of them indicated that they conduct observations. The teacher expressed the following regarding observation before pandemic:

T14: "...to recognize the child, the first thing that comes to mind is a teacher's capacity for observation, their observational skills. I can say that the more developed a teacher's observational skills are, the more effective and in control they are in the classroom. Here, by utilizing observational skills, teachers can understand the child to what extent, behaviourally what kind of child they are, what characteristics they possess, and how they interact with their peers. These are the aspects we focus on during classroom processes."

It can be said that the development of teachers' observation skills is important for recognizing the children in the classroom and assessing them in a way that aligns with their developmental needs.

It has been determined that one-fourth of the teachers during face-to-face education period before pandemic utilize developmental observation forms and developmental reports in getting to recognize and assess the child. The opinions of teachers T1 and T9 regarding this matter are as follows:

T1: "...moreover, I provide examples on developmental observation forms for each developmental domain. For instance, at the beginning of the term, I document incidents such as when my student Poyraz hit his friend, or when İrem was initially seen conversing with an imaginary friend. These instances are recorded on the forms in September, November, March, and June... I offer these examples to illustrate how our student is currently integrating well with peers and has evolved into a more sociable individual. I make a concerted effort to utilize these forms throughout the academic year, as I genuinely value the assessment process."

T9: "When evaluating the developmental reports for the first and second terms, I categorize their progress based on months and by the end of the term, indicating whether they can fully perform in certain areas or if they still require support."

During the face-to-face education period before the pandemic, it was observed that teachers used developmental observation forms and developmental reports to monitor children's progress throughout the process.

It has been observed that only a small fraction of teachers utilize play and drawing in getting to recognize and assess the child before pandemic. T12 and T14 exemplify this as follows:

T12: "For instance, I engage in activities such as introducing children using puppets. When they exhibit shy behaviour, I adjust my voice tone accordingly while using puppet materials to interact with them in a more engaging manner."

T14: "One of the most commonly used methods is drawing. Personally, I conduct individual sessions with the child and utilize drawing activities as a means of analysis."

It is known that children express themselves through play and drawings. It has been observed that teachers also used play and drawing to analyze and interact directly with children before pandemic for recognizing and assessing them. Considering that the classrooms are crowded, and especially because drawing needs to be implemented individually with each child, it is thought that this approach was only observed among a small number of teachers.

During face-to-face education before pandemic, it has been determined that many teachers collaborate with families by conducting parent meetings, while a minority utilize letters. T8 and T1 explained these techniques as follows:

T8: "...I generally aim to meet with each parent individually, especially during the first week of each academic year, to inquire about any special circumstances or ongoing health issues concerning their child. I make a particular effort to conduct these meetings face-to-face to gain a deeper understanding of the child."

T1: "I always make it a point to have parents write a letter describing their child to me. This proves to be immensely helpful for me because while the parents are writing, I specifically ask them to provide detailed information rather than surface-level descriptions such as 'my child is friendly'. I emphasize the importance of elaboration as these details are crucial for me."

It can be stated that family collaboration is important in recognizing and evaluating children. When teachers collaborate with families in various ways, it is believed that families feel valued and help ensure the continuity of education in harmony with the teachers.

It has been observed that only a small percentage of teachers utilize anecdotes, sociometry, and portfolios to recognize and assess the child before pandemic. T5, T17, and T4 expressed their use of these techniques as follows:

T5: "We already constantly record anecdotes within the classroom setting."

T17: "I'm not sure if it's an assessment tool, but I used to conduct small sociometry myself to measure friendship relationships. It involves determining who is popular among peers and who may feel isolated, among other aspects."

T4: "Later, we would observe what the child could accomplish within activities, which were documented through portfolio work. Portfolios served as our primary documents, allowing us to assess their progress by reviewing them."

It is considered important for teachers to use various techniques in the process of recognizing and assessing the children. However, it has been observed that only a small

number of teachers utilize such techniques. It can be stated that it is essential for teachers to receive training on how to implement these techniques.

Techniques Used for Getting to Recognize and Assessing the Child During the Pandemic

Figure 1 indicates that during pandemic through the distance education, teachers utilize techniques such as interviews, post-activity assessments, observations, and collaboration with other teachers for getting to recognize and assess the child.

The majority of teachers have stated that they conduct interviews as part of the process of getting to recognize and assess the child during distance education. T4 expressed it as follows:

T4: "We had the most opportunity for interviews. We had the chance for individual interviews, and we even conducted video calls with families through WhatsApp to get to meet the child from there."

During the pandemic, it can be said that family meetings became particularly important as children spent a lot of time with their families. This way, by engaging in interactive sharing with families, accurate assessments of the child can be made, and the children can be supported effectively.

It has been determined that only a small fraction of teachers utilize post-activity assessments, observation, and collaboration with other teachers as techniques for getting to recognize and assess the children during distance education. The opinions of teacher ... regarding this matter are as follows:

T17: "They sometimes self-assess their activities. For instance, when I ask them initially, 'How do you assess yourself? Did you enjoy it? Did you like it?' and so on..."

T10: "In getting to recognize and assessing the children, I attempted to observe and understand what they told me with the support I received from their families."

T7: "Sometimes, we encounter very different children. I find myself saying, 'I've never seen a child like this before.' There are times when I am unsure of what I should do. Of course, we consult each other, exchange ideas, and interact with the child in different ways. So, we communicate."

Post-activity assessment is considered important for recognizing and assessing children. This allows teachers to determine whether the intended learning outcomes of an activity were achieved and what kind of gains were made from the children's perspective. It can be noted that observing children during distance education is not very easy. However, it is believed that it is important for teachers to conduct observations even through screens. Additionally, due to the limited experience of other teachers with distance education, collaboration among teachers is crucial, as they can positively support each other during this process.

Suggestions of the Early Childhood Teachers to Assess Children in Distance Education

It has been identified that if it is necessary in such a situation early childhood teacher offer suggestions regarding various methods and techniques to recognize and assess the children in distance education, including family interviews and educational regulations. T3, T14, and T10 expressed their thoughts as follows:

T3: "For instance, brainstorming or SCAMPER techniques might be more effective. By utilizing these methods, we can observe the child's creativity or self-expression. Through the question-answer technique, we can understand how they express themselves. When I read a story, I can assess their creativity or language development through these means."

T14: "I personally don't believe that a comprehensive assessment of the child can be made without physically interacting with them, without seeing, touching, or being in the same environment as the child. If we must, the most crucial key point remains the parents. Feedback from parents would be decisive. Besides that, I don't think distance education can be very effective during the preschool period."

T10: "I believe that efforts should be made to support in-service training or for teachers to engage in activities aimed at their professional development."

Using various methods and techniques can better capture children's interests during distance education. It has been emphasized that in-service training is essential for teachers to be familiar with these techniques and to conduct distance education effectively. Furthermore, since children spend a lot of time with their families during the distance education process, teachers have also noted the importance of conducting interviews with families.

Results and Discussion

The objective of the study is to examine the techniques employed by early childhood teachers in the recognition and assessment of children before the pandemic and during distance education. The study outlines the assessment methods employed by teachers, with conclusions organized around several themes: those relevant to the periods of face-to-face education before pandemic and distance education during pandemic, as well as teachers' suggestions. In general, the results of the research show that during face-to-face education before the pandemic, early childhood teachers used different child recognition and assessment techniques. These are observation, developmental observation forms, developmental reports, warm-up games, drawing, collaboration with families, anecdotes, sociometry, and portfolio work. All these types of assessment that form the focus of this study is authentic assessment. Upon analysing the authentic assessment techniques employed by the involved teachers, it was noted that face-to-face education before makes use of observation, plays, portfolios, interviews, and

developmental reports. The terms performance assessment and authentic assessment are frequently used in educational research and literature (Palm, 2019). However, during the pandemic through distance education, teachers' methods of recognising and assessing the child have been somewhat restricted, and it is seen that they have continued to use the methods frequently used in early childhood. Through distance education, teachers utilize techniques such as interviews, post-activity assessments, observations, and collaboration with other teachers. In cases of sudden changes such as pandemics, teachers' suggestions regarding their experiences in recognising and assessing children were examined; it was seen that they mentioned the use of different techniques to assess the children comprehensively and suggested obtaining comprehensive assessment data about children by conducting interviews in cooperation with the family, especially through the education processes continuing from home. Reconsidering conventional assessment techniques may be necessary to assess children's learning in the distance education context. To ensure accurate and reliable assessments of children's learning outcomes, institutions should explore alternative assessment techniques such as competency-based assessments, and authentic assessments (Donlon et al., 2020). As mentioned in the research, all these long-term assessment techniques used to monitor and document children's developmental process offer the opportunity to provide a comprehensive overview of both children's strengths and areas of development (Bagnato, 2007). The first theme pertains to the techniques early childhood teachers employ to recognize and assess children during in-person instruction. During in-person instruction, teachers employ a variety of techniques to recognize and evaluate children, including observation, developmental observation forms, developmental reports, warm-up games, drawing activities, collaboration with families, anecdotal records, sociometric assessments, and portfolio work. As found in this research, Doyle and others (2020) emphasise alternative assessment methods should be explored for accurate and reliable assessment of children's learning outcomes. Also, teachers utilize portfolios to track the complete developmental progression and milestones of children. It is noteworthy to highlight that there are various types of assessments such as standard/authentic formal/informal, prescriptive/descriptive, criterion/norm referenced (Buldu, 2010).

Teachers use techniques including observations, post-activity assessments, interviews, along with collaboration with other teachers to recognize and assess the children during a pandemic through distance education. Before and during the pandemic teacher mention that observation is one of the common techniques to assess the children. Authentic assessment also involves observing children in natural learning environments such as play conducting assessment through meaningful and applicable activities in real-life situations, hands-on activities, and focusing on vital knowledge and skills. As found in this research, distance education has led to difficulties in understanding children's development, because of the restrictions on teachers' one-to-one interaction with children (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020). Early childhood education programs place significant emphasis on child development assessments. It provides early childhood teachers with a productive means of gathering data on children which makes it possible

to recognize children who have developmental issues (Vazquez Nuttall et al., 1999). Authentic assessment tools consist of anecdotes, checklists, rubrics, rating scales, observations, and portfolios (Akman, 2010; Buldu, 2010) and, it has been revealed that many teachers utilize observation, post-activity assessments, or collaboration with other teachers as methods for recognizing and assessing the children during distance learning. Throughout the pandemic, many educational processes and activities shifted online due to distance education (Godhe, 2024). While assessing young children, early childhood teachers encounter a variety of difficulties. Young children are rapidly growing up, and the distance education process presents numerous challenges. As stated in the teachers' views, it is possible to modify assessment techniques to be more inclusive and effectively relevant by having a better understanding of how educational policies, family involvement, and restrictions affect assessment procedures (OECD, 2013). The learning levels of the children in distance education are significantly influenced by their interactions with their peers and teachers (Sher, 2009). To track their development clearly, the assessment procedures should be repeated frequently and methodically documented. Meaningful assessments of early childhood development during the pandemic, where early childhood teachers must conduct a child development assessment to recognize the child's development and learning during the pandemic using a variety of assessment methods in accordance with early childhood assessment standards (Rochanah, 2021).

Anecdotal notes and authentic assessment compile significant occurrences pertaining to children's attitudes and behaviors in various situations. These notes can serve to assess children's creativity, providing valuable material for ongoing evaluations with the teacher. The sudden shift to online learning and assessment techniques during distance education has introduced new and unforeseen circumstances and obstacles in the implementation of teaching process by teachers. Examining how early childhood education professionals recognize and assess children during these unforeseen circumstances is essential. Regarding the limitations of assessment methods, Su and Yang (2024) also noted that teachers typically rely on a single data collection instrument. Furthermore, as a pivotal study in exploring novel approaches, it is theoretically crucial to understand teachers' assessment methodologies concerning young children's online learning during the distance education. Throughout the distance education process, teachers have identified several assessment techniques, including interviews, post-activity assessments, observations, and cooperation among teachers. Observation has been identified as the most frequently utilized evaluation technique in many studies (Ntuli et al., 2014; Okatan & Tagay, 2021; Yılmaz Topuz & Kaya, 2016). Nonetheless, despite discussions among teachers on enhancing children's learning quality and online assessment, early childhood teachers particularly emphasized the integration and assessment of children's learning and development (Godhe, 2024). However, as outlined in the introduction, in the Ministry of National Education (MEB) 2024 Early Childhood Education Program, the mandatory evaluation tools for assessing children include the developmental observation form, developmental report, and developmental portfolio (MEB, 2024). Documentation is essential for demonstrating accountability and for evaluating and organizing the educational programs and other operations of ECE centers. Ultimately,

child documentation is completed for the benefit of individual children and their families. It is employed to promote parental involvement in early education and to support the growth and learning of children in ECE. These broader objectives for child documentation typically aim to enhance the quality of ECE through collaboration with parents and educational initiatives (OECD, 2012). Furthermore, child documentation can be perceived to deliver personalized early education for each child (Carr & Lee, 2012; Driscoll & Rudge, 2005). Early childhood teachers have been observed to offer guidance on a range of approaches and techniques, including family interviews and educational regulations to help recognize and assess the child during the distance learning. Children's interests can be better addressed during distance education by employing a variety of strategies. It has been underlined that for teachers to properly conduct distance education and be conversant with these techniques. Teachers have also emphasized the value of interviewing families because children spend a lot of time with them during the process of distance education. In their research, Işıkoğlu-Erdoğan et al. (2021) found that many early childhood teachers exhibit competencies in child recognition and assessment that are average or below average. Similarly, study by Banerjee and Luckner (2013) suggest that teachers often prioritize specific methods such as developmental observation forms and various observation tools.

Recommendations

Considering the research results on assessment techniques used by early childhood teachers in both face-to-face education before pandemic and distance learning environments, several recommendations can be made for researchers and teachers. These recommendations aim to address the challenges highlighted in the study and to provide insights into how assessment practices can be improved, particularly in the context of distance learning process.

Future research should explore innovative techniques for studying children's natural behaviors during online activities to enhance the adaptation of authentic assessment techniques in distance education settings. The role of technology in facilitating more valid and reliable assessment techniques, particularly in light of the increasing shift toward digital education, warrants detailed investigation. Researchers should examine how tools such as interactive assessment techniques, digital portfolios, and dynamic data analysis might contribute to the accuracy of children's assessments in virtual learning environments. A key focus of future studies should be on understanding how these technological tools influence teachers' assessment practices and their efficacy in assessing children's development across various domains.

The involvement of parents in the assessment process is particularly crucial in distance education process, where teachers face limitations in direct student observation. Research should explore strategies for effectively engaging parents in this process, encouraging them to share observations, participate in dialogues about their child's

progress, and provide regular feedback on developmental milestones. Moreover, the use of digital portfolios presents a promising method for documenting children's learning trajectories in online settings. These portfolios, which can include multimedia elements such as photographs, videos, audio recordings, and samples of children's work, offer a more dynamic way to track developmental progress over time. Therefore, research should also focus on how teachers can maintain continuous feedback loops with both parents and children to ensure that learning objectives are being met. By systematically recording children's actions, preferences, and developmental stages, teachers can better tailor their educational approaches to support each child's individual development.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Dijital bir değerlendirme sistemi, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın Eğitim Vizyonu (MEB, 2018) doğrultusunda çocukların izlenmesi, değerlendirilmesi, yönlendirilmesi ve geliştirilmesi amacıyla uygulanmıştır. Bu nedenle, ülkemizin her çocuğun benzersiz özelliklerini, ilgi alanlarını ve gelişim düzeylerini gözlemleyerek değerlendirildiği ve destek sağladığı kabul edilmektedir; bu durum 21. yüzyılda daha da önem kazanmaktadır. Öğretmenlere ve öğrenme sürecine en uygun zaman, yer ve koşulları sağlamak her zaman çaba gerektirmektedir. Bu durumun nedeni, öğretim stratejilerinin seçimi, öğrenme ortamının düzenlenmesi, öğretim materyallerinin kullanımı ve değerlendirme yöntemleri gibi geniş bir yelpazeye yayılan öğretme ve öğrenme ilkelerini içermesidir (Hartatik ve Fulka Biayuni, 2020). Bu bağlamda yapılan çalışmalar, özellikle okul öncesi öğretmenlerin değerlendirme tekniklerini incelemiştir. Pandemi ile birlikte uzaktan eğitim sürecine ani geçiş, çevrimiçi öğrenme ve değerlendirme süreçlerinde beklenmedik değişimlere yol açmış ve eğitim süreci ile öğretmenlerin uygulamalarında yeni ve öngörülmemiş durumlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu tür beklenmedik koşullar altında, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin bu dönemde çocukları tanıma ve değerlendirme tekniklerinin incelenmesi gerekliliği ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin uzaktan eğitim döneminde çocukların çevrimiçi öğrenmelerine yönelik değerlendirme tekniklerini anlamak, yeni yöntemler açısından büyük öneme sahip bir çalışma olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, bu çalışma ile okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitim öncesi ve uzaktan eğitim sürecinde çocukları tanıma ve değerlendirme tekniklerinin neler olduğunun ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmaktadır.

Nitel araştırma yöntemiyle yürütülen bu çalışmada, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitim sürecinde çocuğu tanıma ve değerlendirmede kullandığı tekniklerin belirlenmesi amacıyla görüşme tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilmiş olan yarı yapılandırılmış "Öğretmen Görüşme Formu" kullanılmıştır. Görüşme formu için uzman görüşlerine başvurulmuş ve son hali verilmiştir. 17 öğretmenin her biriyle yüz yüze görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiş ve görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazıyla kaydedilmiştir. Araştırmanın amacı ve içeriği, görüşmeler yapılmadan önce katılımcılara açıklanmış ve ses kaydı alınması için katılımcıların sözlü ve yazılı onamları alınmıştır. Onay sürecinde, katılımcılara araştırmadan çekilme özgürlüğü ve gizlilik hakları hakkında bilgilendirme yapılmıştır. Araştırmada veriler transkript edildikten sonra betimsel yöntemle analiz edilmiştir. İki araştırmacı bağımsız olarak analiz etmiş, kod ve temaları çıkarmıştır. Kod ve temalar belirlendikten sonra öğretmenlerin görüşlerinden direkt alıntılarla desteklenmiştir.

Araştırmada, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitim sürecinde çocuğu tanıma ve değerlendirmede kullandıkları tekniklerin incelenmesi amaçlanmış olup araştırmanın bulguları belirli temalar altında sunulmuştur. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin yüz yüze eğitim sürecinde çocukları tanımlama ve değerlendirme yöntemleri, bu temaların ilkinin oluşturmaktadır. Öğretmenler, yüz yüze eğitim sürecinde öğrencileri tanımlamak ve değerlendirmek için gözlem, gelişim gözlem formları, gelişim raporları, oyun, resim, ailelerle çalışma, anekdotlar, sosyometri ve portfolyo çalışmaları gibi çeşitli teknikler

kullanmaktadır. Yüz yüze eğitim döneminde çocuğu tanıma ve değerlendirmede aile ile iş birliği kapsamında öğretmenlerin büyük bir çoğunluğunun veli görüşmeleri yaptığı belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenler portfolyo kullanarak çocukların tüm gelişim dönemlerini ve kritik gelişimsel aşamalarını bütüncül bir bakış açısıyla görebilmektedir. Çocuğu değerlendirme sürecinde kullandıkları teknikler arasında standart/özgün, formal/informal, betimleyici/yönlendirici, ölçüt/bağıntı referanslı gibi çeşitli değerlendirme türlerinin mevcut olduğu söylenebilir (Buldu, 2010). Bu çalışmanın odak noktasını oluşturan değerlendirme türü ise özgün değerlendirmedir. Performans değerlendirmesi ve özgün değerlendirme terimleri, eğitim araştırmaları ve literatürde sıklıkla kullanılmaktadır (Palm, 2019). Araştırmada belirtildiği üzere, çocukların gelişim ve öğrenme sürecini izlemek ve belgelemek için kullanılan tüm bu değerlendirme teknikleri, çocukların hem güçlü yönlerine hem de gelişim alanlarına ilişkin kapsamlı bakış fırsatı sağlamaktadır (Bagnato, 2007). Pandeminin başlamasıyla birlikte uzaktan eğitim sürecine geçilmiş ve öğretmenlerin çocukları değerlendirmek için kullandıkları teknikler tamamen değişmemekle birlikte sınırlı hale gelmiştir. Öğretmenlerinin büyük bir çoğunluğu uzaktan eğitim sürecinde çocuğu tanıma ve değerlendirme kapsamında görüşme yaptıklarını belirtmiştir. Uzaktan çalışan öğretmenler çocukları tanıma ve değerlendirme süreçleri için gözlemler, etkinlik sonrası değerlendirmeler, görüşmeler ve diğer eğitimcilerle iş birliği gibi teknikler kullanmaktadır. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin uzaktan eğitimde çocuğu tanıma ve değerlendirmeye ilişkin farklı yöntem ve teknikler kullanılması, aile görüşmeleri ve eğitsel düzenlemeler yapılması önerilerinde bulunmuşlardır.

Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin hem pandemi öncesi yüz yüze eğitimde hem de uzaktan eğitim sürecinde kullandıkları değerlendirme tekniklerine ilişkin araştırma sonuçları göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, araştırmacılar ve öğretmenler için çeşitli önerilerde bulunulabilir. Bu öneriler, çalışmada vurgulanan zorlukları ele almayı ve özellikle uzaktan eğitim süreci bağlamında çocuğu tanıma ve değerlendirme tekniklerinin nasıl geliştirilebileceğine odaklanabilir. Araştırmacılar, dijital eğitimin artan popüleritesini göz önünde bulundurarak uzaktan eğitim süreçlerinde etkileşimli değerlendirme teknikleri ve dijital portfolyolar gibi araçlarla uzaktan eğitimde çocukların gelişim ve öğrenmelerinin nasıl değerlendirilebileceğini, bu teknolojik araçların öğretmenlerin değerlendirme uygulamalarını nasıl etkilediğini ve çocukların öğrenme ve farklı gelişim alanlarını değerlendirmede ne derece etkili olduğunu ortaya çıkarmak üzerine odaklanabilirler.

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