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## **THE EXAMINATION OF THE OPINIONS OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS**

*Research Article*

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# THE EXAMINATION OF THE OPINIONS OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the opinions of parents with children with special needs regarding the distance education process by using SWOT analysis. The research was carried out in the phenomenology study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The study group of the study consists of 10 parents who have children with special needs and who voluntarily agree to participate in the study. The data of the research were obtained by using the semi-structured "Special Education Evaluation Form in Distance Education" prepared by the researchers. SWOT analysis was performed on the written documents collected within the scope of the research by using the content analysis method. As a result of the research; It has been observed that parents of children with special needs have many advantages for their children and themselves, but they have difficulties in certain areas due to some limitations of distance education. The results of the research were discussed concerning the literature and recommendations were made.

*Keywords:* Children with special needs, parents, distance education, special education.

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which first started in China at the end of 2019 and then spread to the whole world, caused countries to adopt different policies, and changes in people's lives. These changes made it necessary for countries to make different implementations on education policies, which constitute an important place in policies. This situation revealed that education processes should be renewed, and planned in accordance with the conditions. Countries have restricted individuals from being in crowded environments to prevent the rapid spread of the virus. As a result of these restrictions, educational activities started to be carried out with distance education tools. However, the fact that many countries are not fully ready for educational activities with distance education tools and that students and their parents who will receive distance education are not used to this process has revealed some adaptation problems (Can, 2020). These adaptation problems have caused children and their parents to be more affected, especially in the area of special education, in which high interaction is required in the teaching process (Asbury et al., 2020; Lee, 2020).

Education offered in appropriate settings with specially trained staff to meet the educational needs of students with special needs, and with programs and methods created for the needs is defined as special education in the literature (Diken, 2019). With the special

education services included in the definition of special education, it is aimed to equip students with basic life skills in order to adapt to society, to establish good relations with their environment, to be productive and happy individuals and to become self-sufficient (Aksoy, 2019). It can be said that the distance education process requires parents and teachers to collaborate more for special education services to achieve these aims (Narzisi, 2020).

The changing education process with the COVID-19 pandemic has also caused significant effects in the field of special education (Senol & Can Yasar, 2020). In the rapid transition of countries to distance education with the pandemic process, plans were first made towards students with normal development, and the education of students with special needs remained in the background (Can, 2020; Hacettepe University Department of Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Diseases, 2020; Narzisi, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). The transition to the distance education process has brought along a difficult adaptation process for students with special needs and their families who need specially trained personnel and prepared programs even in the formal education process (Atli Yilmaz & Atli, 2020; Dhiman et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). About 1 month after the transition of distance education in Turkey, the mobile application "Özel Eğitimdeyim (I am special, I am in education)" was created by the Ministry of National Education to support the education of students in need of special education at home, and with this application, it is aimed to contribute that parents have an efficient process at home with their children. Following this application, different contents and adapted activities for the disability type of children with special needs were created by the Ministry of National Education and these were shared with teachers and parents (Ozer, 2020). To support these applications, the Ministry of National Education has also provided special education contents consisting of cognitive skills, self-care skills, maths, Turkish and daily life skills, which are at primary and secondary school levels, to students with special needs through EBA TV (Ministry of National Education, 2020).

Cooperating with parents in the education process of students with special needs is of great importance in terms of the efficiency of the education process (Sucuoğlu, 2004). With the distance education process, parents have become more active in the education of students with special needs, and in this process, the interaction of parents with their children started to affect the quality of the outcomes of the education process (Hacettepe University Department of Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Diseases, 2020). The fact that along with the distance education process, the academic skills of students with special needs should be supported as well as affective and psycho-social skills reveals that it should be promoted in different dimensions in the distance education process (Bobo et al., 2020; Narzisi, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

In a study on students with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder conducted by Zhang et al. (2020), during the COVID-19 pandemic period, it was observed that children experienced more behavioral problems and ADHD symptoms increased significantly compared to the normal period. In addition, a positive significant relationship was found between the general mood of the children and those of the parents in the study. In another study conducted by Dhiman et al. (2020), it was determined that people who deal with special needs individuals during the pandemic have increased levels of stress, depression and anxiety. On the other hand, with the pandemic process, providing education services through distance education in the home environment may be important in terms of protecting students with special needs from the physical effects of the pandemic. Since individuals with special needs may not have the necessary knowledge and skills to protect themselves from the pandemic in this process. This situation may cause students with special needs to be in a risky position against COVID-19 (Alexander et al., 2020; Turk & McDermott, 2020). However, studies show that the education of children with special needs is negatively affected during

the distance education process (Asbury et al., 2020; Rakap et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Bobo et al. (2020) in France, parents stated that it is more important mentally for their children with special needs to receive education at home in this process. In addition, parents think that special systems and applications for their children through distance education are important for the development of children. In this context, it is of great importance for parents to learn adapted activities that can be applied in the home environment and to collaborate with special education teachers (Ercan et al., 2020).

Considering the studies, the initiation of the distance education process with the coronavirus pandemic has brought many difficulties for children with special needs and their parents but also created some opportunities. In this context, understanding the difficulties and opportunities faced by parents with children with special needs regarding the special education process in distance education is of great importance in terms of planning and organizing the distance education process to be conducted. Therefore, it is thought that studies to be conducted with parents with children with special needs will be important.

### **1.1. The Aim of the Research**

This study aims to examine the opinions of parents with children with special needs regarding the distance education process by using SWOT analysis. In the study, in line with this general purpose, the following sub-goals have sought an answer:

- What are the strengths of the distance education process perceived by parents with children with special needs?
- What are the weaknesses of the distance education process perceived by parents with children with special needs?
- What are the opportunities of the distance education process perceived by parents with children with special needs?
- What are the threats of the distance education process perceived by parents with children with special needs?

## **2. Method**

This section contains information about the research model, the study group, the data collection tool, and the collection and analysis of data.

### **2.1. Research Model**

This research was carried out in the phenomenology study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods. In phenomenological research, data sources consist of individuals or groups who experience the phenomenon that the research focuses on and who can express this phenomenon (Buyukozturk et al., 2018; Creswell, 2020). In addition, phenomenological research helps to make better understandings and to recognize the phenomenon to be investigated (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). In this research, special education was determined as a phenomenon in the distance education process and the experiences of the parents participating in the study regarding this phenomenon were examined. In the research, the opinions of parents with children with special needs on special education during distance education were examined using SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis determines the strengths and weaknesses of the technique, process, or system to be examined, and can be defined as a technique used to reveal opportunities and threats originating from the external environment (Helms & Nixon, 2010). In SWOT analysis, the letter "S" refers to the strengths of the process, the letter "W" to the weaknesses of the process, the letter "O" to the opportunities of the process, and the letter "T" to the threats of the process. Conducting a

SWOT analysis based on the opinions of parents of children with special needs in the distance education process reveals the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of special education in the distance education process for children with special needs, and it is thought that these findings will contribute to the more effective implementation of distance special education services.

## 2.2. Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 10 parents with children with special needs and who voluntarily agree to participate in the study. Demographic information regarding the study group is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic information regarding the parents participating in the study*

Variables	Category	n
School Grade of the Child	Preschool Education	7
	Primary Education	2
	Secondary Education	1
Type of The Need	Cerebral palsy	3
	General Growth Retardation	3
	Mental Deficiency	2
	Autism Spectrum Disorder	1
	Motor Disability	1
	Specific Learning Disability	1

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 7 of the children with special needs of the parents participating in the study continue their pre-school education, 2 of them are at primary and secondary school level and 1 of them continues his education in secondary education. It is observed that 3 of the children with special needs of parents in the study have cerebral palsy, 3 of them have growth retardation, 1 of them has autism spectrum disorder, 1 of them has a motor disability, 2 of them have a mental disability, 1 of them has specific learning difficulties.

## 2.3. Ethical Statement

The ethics committee of Kırşehir Ahi Evran University was consulted for ethical approval of this study. With the decision dated 25.12.2020 and numbered 2020.5, it was decided that the study was ethically appropriate.

## 2.4. Data Collection Tool

The data of the study were obtained using the semi-structured "Special Education Evaluation Form in Distance Education" prepared by the researchers. The opinion form used within the scope of the study consists of two parts. In the first part, there are two questions to determine the educational levels and special needs types of children with special needs of parents participating in the study. In the second part, on the other hand, there are open-ended questions to determine the perceptions of parents with children with special needs regarding the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of special education in distance education.

## 2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Within the scope of the research, data were collected online via Google Forms to maintain the COVID-19 pandemic. With this method, the questions to be used in the internet environment can be shared with many people and makes it possible to communicate with many people at the same time (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). Before starting the research, firstly, the parents with children with special needs were informed about the purpose, importance and scope of the research. In order to collect research data, the "Semi-Structured Special Education Opinion Form in Distance Education" prepared by the researchers was used. The four questions in the Opinion Form are as follows:

1. What are the positive contributions of the "educational contents and adapted activities" applied to your child supported by distance education for you and your child? What advantages did it provide? Can you explain?
2. Are there any difficulties for you and your child during the implementation of "educational contents and adapted activities" for your child supported by distance education? Can you explain?
3. What are the opportunities provided by the "educational contents and adapted activities" for your child supported by distance education for you and your children? How do you expect it will contribute in the future?
4. What are the points to be taken into consideration during the implementation of "educational contents and adapted activities" applied to your child supported by distance education? What else would you recommend to do in the training?

The draft form of the questions was examined by two experts in the field of special education. Experts provided feedback with the draft form appropriate-inappropriate and must be fixed options. According to the Kendal Tau-b correlation coefficient for questions from special education experts, the coefficient of congruence between the answers given to the items was 0.86. This shows that the measuring tool is reliable (Kalayci, 2009).

The link of the research was shared with the parents who voluntarily participated in the study. It takes approximately 10-15 minutes to collect data within the scope of the research. Within the scope of the research, after the data was obtained from the parents, the analysis step was started. The written documents collected within the scope of the research were downloaded to the computer and SWOT analysis was performed using the content analysis method. Four factors forming the structure of the SWOT analysis formed the themes of the research. In this context, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of special education in distance education were determined as the themes of the research. Then, coding was carried out in the context of the themes determined for the SWOT analysis and it was aimed to reach a meaningful whole (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). Parents participating in the study were coded as "A1,..., A10" respectively.

In the study, cogency (internal validity), transference (external validity) and reliability criteria were used to ensure validity and reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, quotations were made from the opinions of the parents of children with special needs from which the codes and categories were obtained, and validity was obtained (Patton, 2018). In order to ensure the reliability of the study, the researchers first analyzed the data individually, and then they came together to examine the codes comparatively and reached a consensus. In addition, the roles of the researchers in the research process were clearly determined in order to ensure reliability. In this research, researchers also took an active role as the implementer of data collection tools. In this process, they provided information to the parents who participated in the study about the scope and aim of the study.

### **3. Findings**

In this section of the research, the results obtained as a result of the analysis made in line with the aims of the research are included.

According to the opinions of the parents with children with special needs who participated in the study, the views on the strengths of special education in distance education were categorized. This categorization is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *The opinions of parents regarding the strengths of special education in distance education*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>Strengths</i>	It has provided more time to spend with the child.	5
	It has provided parents to improve themselves.	5
	It has given the opportunity to know the characteristics of the child better.	4
	It has increased the self-confidence of parents.	3
	It has increased the research interest of parents.	3
	It has increased parent-teacher interaction.	2

According to the opinions of the parents with children with special needs who participated in the study, some parents who participated in the study stated that they spent more time with their children during the distance education process, and that they could get to know and make sense of their characteristics and how their children would learn, and how to teach them skills. In addition, they stated that the self-confidence of parents in contributing to their children's education processes increased. For example, A1 coded parent said "*With the distance education process, I got to know my child better. I have noticed some of his abilities and deficiencies. Seeing these and living them increased my self-confidence and made me want to contribute more to the education of my child.*", and she emphasized that in this process, she had the opportunity to get to know the characteristics of her children with special needs more closely. A6 coded parent said "*During this period, we spent great quality time with my child and had a lot of fun. The process made me see better what my child wanted and his perception. I learned what he was interested in or not. In this way, in the future, I can evaluate the situations in which he is very interested and raise his level whereas I can spend more time on topics that he has little interest in and make more effort for him to learn.*", and she stated that being together with her child more in the distance education process enables him to know the characteristics of her child better and this situation made it easier for him to shape the education of her child. Some parents who participated in the study stated that they spent more time with their children during this process and that they directed themselves to research to support the education of their children. For example, the A2 coded parent said, "*Since I was directly in the distance education process, I was able to observe my child better and follow his development more closely. This situation encouraged me to research contributing to the education of my child.*", and she emphasized that in the distance education process, their desire to do research increased in order to contribute to the education of their child with special needs. Some of the parents who participated in the study stated that they took a more active role in their communication with children and the teaching process, and the process enabled them to improve themselves. For another example, A3 coded parents said, "*The most important contribution of the distance education process to us was to see that education of our child will not be realized only with the teacher. This situation provided us to learn about the education of our child and improved ourselves.*", and they highlighted that they realize they are themselves an important factor in the education of their children in the

distance education process of children with special needs. A6 coded parents said, *"In this process, we received an education as a mother and father. We were able to distinguish between our wrong and right communication with our child. In this process, we were able to improve ourselves."*, and they stated that they improved themselves in communication with their children during the distance education process. Two of the parents participating in the study stated that their interaction with the teachers of their children increased during the distance education process. For another example, the A8 coded parents said, *"Since we, as parents, apply the opinions and suggestions of our special education teachers with high discipline and determination, the process went easy for us. Our teachers guided us and enabled us to implement practices on how to support the development of our child in the home environment during this process."*, and they emphasized that they collaborated with teachers of their child in this process.

Table 3 contains the categorization of the views regarding the weaknesses of special education in distance education according to the opinions of the parents with children with special needs who participated in the study.

Table 3. *The opinions of parents regarding the weaknesses of special education in distance education*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>Weaknesses</i>	Parents had difficulty managing the process.	6
	Parents have not been able to control problem behaviors.	4
	Parents have a lack of knowledge and skills.	3
	Parents have needed extra time.	1

A significant portion of the parents participating in the study stated that they had difficulties in managing the distance education process. For example, A2 coded parent said, *"... According to us, teachers can manage a possible crisis that may occur during the lesson better and solve the problem. However, we may have some difficulties in this regard."*, and she stated that he had difficulties in intervening instantly with her children during the distance education process. The A1-coded parent said, *"It was difficult for me to making my child sit at the table for a long time..."* while she was expressing some of her difficulties in managing this process. Some of the parents who participated in the study stated that they had difficulties in controlling some problematic behaviors of their children during this period. For another example, A6 coded parent said, *"I could not deal with my child's insistence on something. Since I am his mother, he has more influence over me. I had difficulty controlling this behavior."*, and she stated that she had difficulties in controlling some behaviors of her child during the distance education process. The A2 coded parent said, *"Yes, absolutely. I had difficulties in this process. I am not a very patient person. At the same time, since I am not an educator, I have difficulties in maintaining discipline in the lessons and bringing the desired things to my child. Since this process is a task for me, the feeling of obligation passes from me to my child. Therefore, I have problems managing the process and controlling my child's behavior."* while she was expressing the difficulty in controlling the behavior of her child in the distance education process. Additionally, some of the parents who participated in the study stated that they experienced difficulties in the distance education process due to the lack of knowledge and skills. For another example, the A4 coded parent said, *"I had difficulties in this process because I do not have academic knowledge..."*, and she emphasized that there is a lack of knowledge and skills. One parent who participated in the study stated that they need to spend more time with their children in the distance education process and

that it can be considered as a weakness that this process requires extra time. For instance, A4 coded parent said, "...I had difficulties in supporting the education of my child as I had works that require extra effort and preparation.", to have emphasized that having her own jobs and preparing for them negatively affected her contribution to the education of her child in this process.

According to the opinions of the parents with children with special needs who participated in the study, the categorization of the views regarding the opportunities of special education in distance education is given in Table 4.

Table 4. *The opinions of parents regarding the opportunities for special education in distance education*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>f</i>
<i>Opportunities</i>	More interaction with the child.	5
	The child was able to continue his education independent of time and place.	5
	It contributed to the development of the child.	5
	It can be easily used in cases such as pandemics and diseases.	4
	Presence of rich distance education content and teachers.	1
	It provided financial savings.	1

Some of the parents who participated in the study stated that their children had more opportunities to interact with them during the distance education process. For example, A2 coded parent said, "*Distance education enabled us to spend more time with my child...*", and she stated that it could be an opportunity for her child to interact more with the child in this process. Similarly, A3 coded parent emphasized, "*We learned to spend effective and productive time and play games with my child ...*". A few of the parents who participated in the study stated that it can be considered as an opportunity for their child to continue his education independently of time and place. For example, the A4 coded parent said, "*I think it will be beneficial for my child's development to use the distance education process in non-formal educational activities. It is really important that my child will not break away from the education process with the opportunity of distance education when he cannot receive one-on-one education with his teacher at school. For instance, it is an advantage that he will be able to continue his education in situations such as when the teacher becomes ill or when we go out of town for a long time.*", and she emphasized that the distance education process eliminates the perception of time and place and turns into an opportunity for education of her child. Some of the parents who participated in the study highlighted that the distance education process contributes to the development of their children and that this situation can be considered as an opportunity. For another example, the A5 coded parent said, "*The lack of any education in this process creates difficulties for my child's development. Within this scope, it is important that the development of my child continues with distance education in this difficult process...*" while she was stating that the distance education process supports the development of her child during the pandemic period. A8 coded parents, on the other hand, said, "*Distance education has saved us both time and money, as we, as parents, constantly support the education of our children and do repetitions at home.*", and they emphasized that the education provided in this process contributes to the development of children and at the same time provides a financial saving for them. Some of the parents who participated in the study stated that it is an opportunity to use the distance education process easily in cases such as pandemics and diseases. For example, A1 coded parent said, "*Distance education is*

*required in compulsory situations such as pandemics.*", to have emphasized that realizing distance education is an opportunity during the pandemic process. A9 coded parent said, *"Distance education has given my child the opportunity to continue his education without endangering his health. I find it is sufficient for the pandemic period, even if sufficient efficiency cannot be obtained in the long term in this way."*, to have emphasized that distance education is an opportunity during the pandemic process.

According to the opinions of the parents with children with special needs who participated in the study, the categorization of the views regarding the threats of special education in distance education is given in Table 5.

Table 5. *The opinions of parents regarding the threats of special education in distance education*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>f</i>
Threats	Technological tools are used too much.	6
	It does not attract the attention of the child.	5
	Distance education content is not rich.	4
	The duration of the training contents can be inefficient.	4
	It is ineffective compared to formal education.	2
	It is ineffective in younger age groups.	1

Many of the parents who participated in the study stated that the excessive use of technological tools in the distance education process can be perceived as a threat. For example, the A5 coded parent said, *"My child's use of technological tools too much in this process made him not want to stand in front of the screen after a while."*, to have emphasized that the distance education process poses a threat for children to spend too much time with technological tools. Some of the parents who participated in the study stated that the activities and arrangements adapted for special education in distance education did not attract the attention of the child. For example, A1 coded parent said, *"Distance education content should be more game-based and different games should be added to the programs."*, to have stated that the contents of distance education can be enriched with games to attract the attention of children. A8 coded parent said, *"My child's comfort at home created difficulties for the distance education process..."*, and she emphasized that distance education makes it difficult for the child to concentrate his attention and continue his courses. A9 coded parent said, *"Studying on the computer is not as attractive as one-on-one for children. Some days are more harmonious and productive, while some days are less productive. Unfortunately, a standard cannot be achieved in terms of efficiency..."* while she was stating that the distance education process was insufficient to attract the attention of children. A few of the parents participating in the study stated that the lack of rich distance education content is a threat to special education in distance education. For example, the A2 coded parent said, *"...Continuous repetition of activities that children can do makes children bored. If the content of the training is enriched and their duration is not too long, I think this boredom can be avoided."*, to have emphasized that the contents in the distance education process are not very rich. Some of the parents who participated in the study emphasized that the duration of special education contents in distance education can be inefficient. For example, A6 coded parent said, *"The duration of educational contents should be adjusted according to the condition of the child and analyzed well. When we sit face to face and start an education, we should observe the child's situation well and make sure he passes the time to the full. During*

*this process, we experienced inefficiencies regarding the duration of the training contents."* while she was stating that the duration of special education contents in distance education can be inefficient. A8 coded parent said "...*The time of the course should be adjusted according to the productive time of the child. Distance education should not exceed 1 or 2 hours a day. If it will be done for 2 hours, there should be at least half an hour break in between. We had difficulties in this regard.*", to have expressed difficulty regarding the duration of special education contents in distance education. Two of the parents participating in the study emphasized that distance education was ineffective compared to formal education. For example, A2 coded parent said, "*I do not think that distance education is much more beneficial for children with special needs than education with teachers. Because I think children with special needs need touch and eye contact more than anyone else.*", and she emphasized that the distance education process is ineffective compared to formal education. One parent stated that special education in distance education is ineffective for younger age groups. For example, the A10 coded parent said, "*Since the children are young, distance education is inadequate and not effective. The course subjects are treated supposedly.*", to have emphasized that distance education is ineffective in younger age groups.

#### **4. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions**

As a result of the research, it was observed that the distance education process brought many advantages to parents with children with special needs, both for their children and themselves, but also that they have difficulties in certain issues due to some limitations of distance education. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the realization of the education of children with special needs using distance education tools has given parents a more important role in this process compared to the normal period. In this process, the support of parents for the education of their children with special needs and being active will enable them to learn how to support children in their skills acquisition. With the start of face-to-face training, continuing the experiences they gained in the distance education process at home outside of the school environment will have a positive impact on the development of children.

In this study, the strengths and weaknesses of the distance education process of parents with children with special needs in terms of their children and themselves are discussed on the basis of the opinions of the parents. In this context, the services to be carried out for the situations that parents need in the distance education process are of great importance.

##### **4.1. The Strengths of Special Education in Distance Education**

As a result of the research, parents with children with special needs stated that the distance education process has strengths such as spending more time with their children, providing them with the opportunity to develop themselves in the educational processes of their children, providing the opportunity to get to know their children better, encourage them to do research on the educational processes of their children and increase the interaction between parents and teachers. In a study conducted by Senol and Can Yasar (2020), it was seen that parents with children who have special needs expressed that their children had positive effects such as learning new things from them, learning to meet their own needs and increasing the time spent with the family along with distance education practices during the pandemic time. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the fact that children with special needs continue their educational processes only in the home environment requires parents to be more active in this process (Hasanoglu Yazcayir & Gurgur, 2018). In this process, the parents support their children's educational processes by assuming the role of a "teacher". It can be said that this situation enables parents to play a more active role in their children's education processes, to develop themselves, to increase their awareness and interaction with their children. As a matter of fact, in this study, it was seen that parents spend more time with their

children with the distance education process and they make efforts and research to improve themselves on the education processes of their children. In the study conducted by Senol and Can Yasar (2020), it was observed that parents had the opportunity to get to know some of their children's interests, abilities and characteristics during the distance education process. These behaviors that parents exhibit to support the education of their children with special needs are significant in terms of meeting the needs of these children both during the pandemic process and in the formal education process. Because special education services can increase their efficiency with the active participation of the family along with the teachers (Cavkaytar, 2018). Reinforcing the skills gained in distance education and formal education with the family can be important for the development of students with special needs (Akmese & Kayhan, 2014). In the distance education process, it is important for parents to make more efforts to contribute to the development of their children since they can improve themselves. It can be said that the efforts of the parents to improve themselves and feeling motivated in this regard can allow the adapted activities prepared for children with special needs to be productive.

#### **4.2. The Weaknesses of Special Education in Distance Education**

As a result of the research, parents with children with special needs stated that the distance education process has weaknesses such as difficulty in managing the process, inability to cope with problematic behaviors of children, lack of knowledge and skills of parents and requiring extra time. A similar finding was encountered in the research conducted by Şenol and Can Yaşar (2020). In this study conducted with parents with children who have special needs, it was observed that negative situations such as the inability of the family, the emergence of problematic behaviors, and difficulty in planning emerged with distance education. In addition, the rapid transition to distance education with the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many adaptation problems for teachers, students and parents (Atli Yilmaz & Atli, 2020; Sercemeli & Kurnaz, 2020). It can be said that the fact that distance education tools are not used widely before the pandemic period in our country may cause this adaptation problem. Also, it can be said that the fact that parents are as important as teachers in this process and that parents do not have enough information about this process may cause children with special needs not to get enough efficiency from the distance education process. In a study conducted by Rakap et al. (2020), it was observed that parents of students with special needs felt moderately competent in the educational processes of their children. During the distance education process, the lack of knowledge and skills of parents in the face of problematic behaviors of children with special needs can cause parents to experience stress and anxiety (Asbury et al., 2020; Yazici & Durmusoglu, 2017). This situation may also cause an increase in the frequency of problem behaviors in children with special needs. In this context, it can be said that providing to them information and skills for the problems that parents with children with special needs may experience in the distance education process during the pandemic and conducting appropriate guidance services can be an important factor (Asbury et al., 2020; Yilmaz & Bengisoy, 2019).

#### **4.3. The Opportunities of Special Education in Distance Education**

As a result of the research, parents with children with special needs stated that the distance education process has opportunities such as their children to interact more with them, continuing education of their children regardless of time and place, contributing to the development of their children, being easily used in cases of pandemic and disease, providing financial savings, the availability of rich distance education content and teachers. With the distance education process, having more children at home can increase their interaction with their parents. In addition, in this process, children with special needs can continue with the

distance education tool, independent of time and place, to activities adapted to their disabilities. The fact that students with special needs stay away from their education can negatively affect the skills and development that they have gained (Aksoy, 2019). In this context, it is very important for children with special needs to be able to continue education services planned according to their disabilities with distance education tools in terms of these children to be able to adapt to society and gain independent living skills.

#### **4.4. The Threats of Special Education in Distance Education**

As a result of the research, parents with children with special needs stated that the distance education process has threats such as children spending too much time with technological tools, being inadequate and uninteresting distance education content in some cases, being ineffectiveness compared to formal education, and inability to get the desired efficiency in young age groups. Although it is seen as a convenience for children to carry out their education with technological tools with the pandemic process, excessive exposure to the screen may pose a risk in terms of children's physical, psychological and social development (Király et al., 2020). In this context, children with special needs spending too much time with technological tools during the distance education process can be considered as a threat. In addition, the fact that the distance education process in special education is not very common in our country may cause a lack of sufficient digital content in this field (Can, 2020). After the transition to the distance education process in our country, digital content related to special education started to be prepared by the Ministry of National Education and it took some time to include these contents in the process (Ozer, 2020). Within this scope, the lack of sufficient digital content in the distance education processes of special needs students can be considered as a threat. In the study conducted by Rakap et al. (2020), it has been observed that parents with children with special needs do not find EBA rich in special education content during the distance education process and have difficulty in finding content for the needs of their children. In another study, parents stated that the distance education process was not efficient due to reasons such as lack of material, expensive materials and inability to provide material support during this period (Senol & Can Yasar, 2020). Finally, the inability of the distance education process to produce the desired efficiency in younger age groups can be considered as a threat to the special education process in distance education (Ozyurek et al., 2016). Since sitting children in younger age groups in front of the screen for a long time and asking them to continue their education in a virtual environment can create difficulties in terms of their development processes.

#### **4.5. Suggestions**

This research was carried out to examine the opinions of parents with children with special needs on the distance education process. As a result of the research, it was seen that the distance education process created many positive situations for parents themselves and their children, but distance education was limited in some issues. Within this framework, enhancing the strengths and opportunities of the distance education process and improving the limited aspects are very important for the success of the education of students with special needs. In this process, it can also be said that it may be important to increase the frequency of family education programs for the needs of parents and to carry out these programs effectively. In addition, digital content can be created by researchers in the field of special education and stakeholder institutions. It can be said that sharing these prepared documents with teachers and parents can contribute to the distance education processes of students with special needs. Finally, this study was conducted with parents with special needs children. It can be said that distance education studies to be carried out with the teachers of students with special needs in the future can contribute to the literature.

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