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Message from the Editor

I am very pleased to publish first issue in 2023. As an editor of Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counselling (TIJSEG) this issue is the success of the reviewers, editorial board and the researchers. In this respect, I would like to thank to all reviewers, researchers and the editorial board. The articles should be original, unpublished, and not in consideration for publication elsewhere at the time of submission to Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counselling (TIJSEG), For any suggestions and comments on TIJSEG, please do not hesitate to send mail. The countries of the authors contributed to this issue (in alphabetical order): Albania, Cyprus, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria, and Turkey.

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Vol 12, No 1 (2023)

Table of Contents

Research Articles

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS

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Abstract

Assistive technologies are frequently used by special education teachers working with students affected by disability. The effective use of assistive technologies by teachers depends on their attitudes towards technology. Classroom management is one of the most important elements of effective teaching. One of the main purposes of classroom management is to create an orderly and safe classroom environment that will increase the motivation and responsibility of children and enable them to learn. In this study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies and their classroom management skills. Relational survey model was used in the research. 170 special education teachers working in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus participated in the research. Attitude towards Assistive Technologies Scale and Classroom Management Skills Scale were used as data collection tools. Data analyzes were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 program. It was concluded that there was a positive correlation between special education teachers' general attitude scores towards assistive technology and behavioral, affective and cognitive components sub-dimensions and classroom management skills scores. As a result of the research, the research results were discussed within the framework of the literature and recommendations for further research and practices were included.

Keywords: Assistive technologies, attitude, classroom management skills, special education teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Special education is defined as the education process that is given to individuals with special needs, who are different from their peers, in order to make individuals with special needs independent, socialize and be productive, by supporting them to reach the highest level in line with their qualifications, preventing the disability effect from becoming insufficient (Ataman, 2011). It is stated that special education teachers are trained personnel who provide daily education, training and life support to individuals with special needs (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Teachers working with individuals with special needs are not expected to use a single educational method or material for individuals with different developmental characteristics. At this point, special education teachers should evaluate the needs of individuals with special needs in the best way and plan them with the most appropriate materials in the most appropriate educational environment. The use of technology

and appropriate materials is of great importance in creating a suitable environment. According to Can-Yasar and Uyanik (2013), use of technology is a necessity to increase the quality of education and to contribute to the development of children of all ages.

Educational technology is the process of using technology resources in education with certain methods and techniques by following a systematic planning based on research and theories in the field of learning and communication in behavioral sciences. Given the general benefits of using technology in education and training, it is possible to include that it is motivating and interesting to the child; contributes to lasting experiences; develops skills and behavior; has wide applicability and provides education based on needs (Culp, Honey, & Mandinach, 2005).

Language, communication and auditory perceptions, visual perceptions, establishing cause-effect relationships, memory and learning characteristics of students with special needs show a certain limitation compared to students with typical development. All individuals with special needs should be able to benefit from educational opportunities and special education services in line with their interests and abilities. The use of technology in special education offers different ways of learning to meet the different needs of individuals with special needs and to overcome the difficulties in their learning lives. With this understanding, it is beneficial to make various adaptations in the education given to individuals with special education needs and also to use technology applications in teaching materials in accordance with the needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002).

The use of technology offers new ways of teaching and learning to everyone in the learning process. It also provides the opportunity to create and present an environment suitable for students' characteristics. The use of technology in special education is described as the concept of "special education technology" and explained in two ways as "assistive technologies" and "instructional technologies" (Edyburn, 2001; Senjam, 2019; Bouck & Long, 2021). Assistive technologies are defined as any tool used to facilitate the life of individuals with special needs, in order to reduce or eliminate the limitations experienced by the individuals with disabilities in interaction with the individuals around them. Pettersson and Fahlstrom (2010) stated that assistive technologies are the use of any tool that allows individuals with disabilities to eliminate the difficulties they may encounter in education, professional, daily and social life, to develop their competencies and to make the most of their existing capacities.

Assistive technologies are categorized as low, medium and high technology devices. Visual cards/pictorial symbols, visual charts, pencil holders, adapted pencils and worksheets, reading magnifiers, highlighter markers and pens, adapted scissors, page turners are examples for low-tech materials; timers, reading pen, talking calculators, talking dictionary are examples of mid-tech materials and tablet computers, smart phones, smart boards, smart watches, virtual reality, augmented reality applications, smart personal assistants, digital books, mobile applications and computer software can be given as examples of complex and high-level technologies (Kaye, Yeager, & Reed, 2008). Instructional technologies, on the other hand, are defined as a field that covers the processes of analyzing learning-based performance problems, designing, developing, applying, evaluating and managing teaching processes and resources to improve learning performance. Building a bridge between the field of special education and technology and making the necessary arrangements for individuals with disabilities provides equal opportunities and opportunities in education for individuals with disabilities (Aslan, 2018).

Effective use of assistive technologies by teachers depends on their attitudes towards assistive technologies (Kisla, 2008). Teachers who have positive attitudes about assistive technologies make use of technology applications for students to achieve success and give more space to use these technologies in classroom activities. In studies investigating attitudes towards assistive technologies in the literature, it has been reported that teachers generally exhibit a positive attitude (Maushak, Kelley, & Blodgett, 2001; Garcia & Seevers, 2005; Murugaiyan & Arulsamy, 2013; Aslan & Kan, 2017).

Studies reveal the strong link between student achievement and classroom management. The findings of these studies show that the most important factors affecting the learning of all students with and without special needs in the classroom are classroom management and teacher behaviors (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993; Stage & Quiroz, 1997; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Accordingly, an effective classroom management that paves the way for success increases student participation, reduces problem behaviors and ensures the best use of education time. Therefore, it is emphasized that the development of teachers' classroom management strategies is important for the effectiveness of education (Akalin, 2015).

Classroom management includes the organization of the physical environment of the classroom, the management of planning and programming activities, the management of relationships and communication in the classroom, and the management of children's behavior (Martin & Sass, 2010). Classroom management skills include classroom teaching management, classroom procedures and routine working style, arranging physical order in the classroom and managing student behavior (Akin & Kocak, 2007). Classroom management is the process of guiding student behaviors to make the classroom ready for learning (Turan, 2006). It is indispensable for an effective classroom management that teachers love their job and are motivated when entering the classroom.

For individuals with special needs, education is one of the most important channels necessary for them to maintain their independence in their lives. Since children with special needs cannot benefit from general education services, they should receive education and training services in line with individualized education programs (IEP), depending on the degree and type of their disability. In this context, studies on the function of assistive technologies and ways to benefit from the opportunities they provide are increasing all over the world. It is very important that students with special needs, who are expected to achieve certain gains they need due to their disabilities, achieve the desired educational success (Maata, 2016). The most effective element in this process is teachers. One of the most important tasks of teachers in achieving educational success is to create an effective learning environment in the classroom by increasing the motivation of students for the lesson. One of the most important factors in the formation of an effective learning environment is the use of assistive technology. In addition, it is thought that the use of assistive technologies in the classroom will contribute positively to classroom management.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are limited number of studies examining the relationship between special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies and their classroom management skills. With this research, it is aimed to determine the level of relationship, to take necessary precautions to understand the relationship between special education teachers' classroom management skills and their attitudes towards assistive technologies, and to make recommendations for further research. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to determine the relationship between the attitudes of special education teachers in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus towards assistive technologies and their classroom management skills. In line with this aim, answers to the following questions were sought in this study:

1. Do special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies differ significantly according to age, gender, educational level, professional seniority and daily working hours?
2. Do special education teachers' classroom management skills differ significantly according to age, gender, educational level, professional seniority and daily working hours?
3. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies and their classroom management skills?

METHOD
Research model
The relational survey model was used in this study, which was conducted to reveal the relationship between special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies and their classroom

management skills and to examine them in terms of various variables. Relational survey models are research designs that determine the existence and degree of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

Study group

A total number of 170 teachers working as special education teachers in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus participated in this research. Demographic characteristics of special education teachers are shown in Table 1. In the selection of the study group of the research, easily accessible purposeful sampling method was used. This method was used to reach the data in a more practical way. The easily accessible sampling method adds speed and practice to the research (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018).

The percentage and frequency distributions of the participants according to demographic variables are shown in Table 1. As it can be seen from the table, 45.29% of the teachers participating in the research are in the age group of 20-29, 38.82% of them are in the age group of 30-39, 15.88% of them are in the age group of 40 and above. In addition, 51.76% of them are female and 48.24% are male. It was determined that 37.06% of them had 1-5 years, 41.18% of them had 6-10 years and 21.76% of them had 11 years or more professional seniority and 83.53% of the special education teachers have graduate and 16.47% of them have postgraduate degree. It was also observed that 33.53% of the teachers work 1-5 hours a day, 52.35% of them work between 6 and 10 hours and 14.12% work 11 hours and more.

Table 1. Distribution of Teachers by Demographic Characteristics

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-29 years	77	45.29
30-39 years	66	38.82
40 years and above	27	15.88
Gender		
Female	88	51.76
Male	82	48.24
Professional seniority		
1-5 years	63	37.06
6-10 years	70	41.18
11 years and above	37	21.76
Educational level		
Graduate	142	83.53
Postgraduate	28	16.47
Daily working hours		
1-5 hours	57	33.53
6-10 hours	89	52.35
11 hours and above	24	14.12

Data Collection Tools
Teacher Demographic Information Form
This form was prepared by the researchers in order to obtain information about age, gender, professional seniority, educational level and daily working hours of special education teachers who participated in this research.

Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale

Attitudes Towards Assistive Technologies Scale developed by Aslan and Kan (2017) was used to determine the attitudes of the special education teachers included in the study towards assistive technologies. Attitudes Towards Assistive Technologies Scale is an 18-item scale prepared using a five-point Likert-type rating. There are 4 sub-dimensions in the scale: Behavioral component, Affective component, Negative emotion component and Cognitive component. As a result of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test conducted in this study, the reliability coefficient for the scale was found to be 0.911 and it was determined that the data collected from the scale was reliable.

Classroom Management Skills Scale

In this study, the "Classroom Management Skills Scale" developed by Denizel-Guven and Cevher (2005) was used to determine the classroom management skill levels of teachers. The scale was prepared in a 4-point Likert type and consists of 40 items collected under one dimension. Evaluation of the Likert-type scale is made in the form of four-point scales as "always", "often", "rarely" and "never". The reliability of the data obtained from the participants was tested with the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was calculated as .96. Based on this data, it was decided that the data collected with the scale met the reliability condition.

Data collection

Since the research was carried out during the Covid-19 epidemic, the prepared scales were sent to the teachers via e-mail and messaging programs and they were asked to answer them electronically. The data were collected by reaching 170 special education teachers via Google Forms. The answers from the teachers were recorded electronically. After the data collection process was completed, the collected data were evaluated for analysis.

Data analysis

The analysis of the data obtained in the research was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 program. In accordance with the sub-objectives of the research, the following statistical operations were performed. In order to determine the hypothesis tests to be used in the research, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to examine the normal distribution of the data and it was determined that it did not show normal distribution. Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to determine whether the attitudes towards assistive technologies and classroom management skills of teachers working in special education schools differ according to age, educational status, professional seniority and Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether they differ according to gender. Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the attitudes of teachers working in special education schools towards assistive technologies and their classroom management skills.

RESULTS

In this section, the results revealed by analysis of data are presented. First, an attempt is made to determine the attitudes towards assistive technologies and classroom management skills of special education teachers. Then, the results of correlational analysis regarding whether there is a relationship between the attitudes towards assistive technologies and classroom management skills of special education teachers are presented.

Table 2. Special Education Teachers' Scores on Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale

	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Behavioral component	170	17.34	5.16	5	25
Affective component	170	15.94	4.46	5	25
Negative emotion component	170	10.74	3.73	4	20
Cognitive component	170	10.34	3.,20	3	15
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	170	54.35	12.64	17	85

The descriptive statistical values related to scores obtained in general and from sub-dimensions of the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale by special education teachers are given in Table 2. When Table 2 is examined, it was determined that special education teachers obtained an average of 17.34±5.16 points from the behavioral component sub-dimension of the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale, 15.94±4.46 points from the affective component sub-dimension, 10.74±3.73 points from the negative affect component sub-dimension and an average of 10.34±3.20 points from cognitive component sub-dimension. It was found that special education teachers got an average of 54.35±12.64 points from the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale with the lowest score being 17 and the highest score being 85.

Table 3. Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies by Age Groups

	Age Group	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	χ^2	p	Difference
Behavioral component	20-29 years	77	19.16	4.63	20.00	104.32			1-2
	30-39 years	66	15.71	5.08	15.00	68.77	20.785	.000*	1-3
	40 years and above	27	16.11	5.25	15.00	72.74			
Affective component	20-29 years	77	16.87	4.53	18.00	97.17			
	30-39 years	66	15.24	4.10	15.50	77.00	8.095	.017*	1-3
	40 years and above	27	14.96	4.76	15.00	73.00			
Negative emotion component	20-29 years	77	10.16	3.35	10.00	77.49			
	30-39 years	66	11.14	3.70	12.00	92.14	3.756	.153	
	40 years and above	27	11.44	4.62	12.00	92.11			
Cognitive component	20-29 years	77	11.17	3.18	11.00	99.29			1-2
	30-39 years	66	9.82	3.04	9.00	76.27	11.643	.003*	1-3
	40 years and above	27	9.22	3.18	9.00	68.74			
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	20-29 years	77	57.35	12.41	58.00	99.82			1-2
	30-39 years	66	51.91	11.78	53.00	73.61	11.937	.003*	1-3
	40 years and above	27	51.74	13.89	51.00	73.72			

*p<.05 (χ2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

Table 3 shows the findings obtained from the Kruskal Wallis H test regarding the comparison of teachers' scores on the scale of Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale by age groups. When Table 3 is examined, it was determined that the difference between the scores of the teachers in the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale by age groups and the behavioral component, affective component and cognitive component sub-dimensions in the scale was statistically significant (p<0.05). The scores of the 20-29 age group teachers in the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale in general and in the behavioral component and cognitive component sub-dimensions of the scale are higher than the other teachers. In addition, teachers in the age group of 20-29 are higher in the affective component sub-dimension than teachers in the age group of 40 and over. It was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the scores of the negative emotion component sub-dimension of the scale according to the age group of the teachers (p>.05).

Table 4. Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies by Gender

	Gender	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	Z	p
Behavioral component	Female	88	18.61	5.25	20.00	98.76	-3.645	.000*
	Male	82	15.96	4.72	16.00	71.27		
Affective component	Female	88	16.60	4.54	17.00	93.45	-2.189	.029*
	Male	82	15.22	4.29	15.00	76.97		
Negative emotion component	Female	88	9.45	3.57	10.00	67.70	-4.900	.000*
	Male	82	12.12	3.40	12.00	104.60		
Cognitive component	Female	88	11.07	3.24	11.00	97.09	-3.199	.001*
	Male	82	9.55	2.99	9.00	73.07		
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	Female	88	55.74	12.99	57.00	92.22	-1.846	.065
	Male	82	52.85	12.16	54.00	78.29		

*p<.05 (Z: Mann-Whitney U test)

In Table 4, Mann-Whitney U test results for the comparison of the scores obtained from the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale according to gender variable. It was revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the teachers in the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale in general and the behavioral component, affective component, negative emotion component and cognitive component sub-dimensions of the scale (p<.05). While female teachers' scores on the Attitude towards Assistive Technologies Scale and the behavioral component, affective component and cognitive component sub-dimensions of the scale were higher than male teachers, their scores on the negative emotion component sub-dimension were found to be lower.

Table 5. Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies by Professional Seniority

	Professional Seniority	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	χ^2	p	Difference
Behavioral component	1-5 years	63	19.02	4.89	20.00	103.24			1-2
	6-10 years	70	16.11	4.67	16.00	72.66	13.536	.001*	1-3
	11 years and above	37	16.78	5.79	14.00	79.59			
Affective component	1-5 years	63	17.13	4.67	18.00	100.16			1-2
	6-10 years	70	15.06	3.80	15.00	74.70	9.338	.009*	1-3
	11 years and above	37	15.57	4.91	15.00	80.97			
Negative emotion component	1-5 years	63	10.27	3.39	10.00	78.15			2-3
	6-10 years	70	11.59	3.50	12.00	98.27	8.246	.016*	
	11 years and above	37	9.95	4.42	10.00	73.85			
Cognitive component	1-5 years	63	11.48	3.03	12.00	104.29			1-2
	6-10 years	70	9.69	2.74	9.50	73.81	14.797	.001*	1-3
	11 years and above	37	9.62	3.80	9.00	75.64			
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	1-5 years	63	57.89	12.86	59.00	101.89			1-2
	6-10 years	70	52.44	10.94	52.50	76.27	11.126	.004*	1-3
	11 years and above	37	51.92	14.17	50.00	75.05			

*p<.05 (χ2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

The Kruskal-Wallis H test results regarding the comparison of the scores obtained from the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale according to professional seniority variable are shown in Table 5. When Table 5 is examined, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference between the scores of the teachers from the overall scale and its subcomponents according to professional seniority (p<.05). Teachers with a professional seniority of 1-5 years received lower scores from the overall attitude scale and from the behavioral component, affective component and cognitive component sub-dimensions of the scale compared to other teachers. In addition, the scores of the teachers with a professional seniority of 11 years or more in the sub-dimension of the negative emotion component were found to be lower than the teachers with a professional seniority of 6-10 years.

TIJSEG

Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counseling   2023, volume 12, issue 1

Table 6. Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies by Educational Level

	Educational level	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	Z	p
Behavioral component	Graduate	142	17.24	5.12	18.00	84.97	-3.082	.214
	Postgraduate	28	18.05	4.92	18.00	92.25		
Affective component	Graduate	142	15.99	4.65	16.00	86.80	-2.639	.267
	Postgraduate	28	16.35	3.96	16.00	89.38		
Negative emotion component	Graduate	142	10.96	3.62	11.00	88.03	-.902	.637
	Postgraduate	28	10.35	3.87	10.00	80.34		
Cognitive component	Graduate	142	10.37	3.10	11.00	86.06	-1.658	.437
	Postgraduate	28	10.60	3.25	11.00	89.24		
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	Graduate	142	54.56	13.31	54.50	86.78	-2.676	.262
	Postgraduate	28	55.35	10.36	57.00	89.46		

(χ^2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

In Table 6, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test used to compare the scores of the Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale according to teachers' educational level are given. According to the table, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between overall scores of the teachers obtained from the scale and its subcomponents according to their educational level ($p>.05$). In other words, the scores of teachers with graduate and postgraduate degrees from the scale are similar.

Table 7. Comparison of Teachers' Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies by Daily Working Hours

	Daily working hours	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	χ^2	p	Difference
Behavioral component	1-4 hours	57	18.30	5.01	19.00	95.38	6.827	.033*	1-3
	5-8 hours	89	17.33	5.04	18.00	84.92			2-3
	9 hours and above	24	15.08	5.44	14.00	64.21			
Affective component	1-4 hours	57	17.00	4.58	17.00	98.21	8.604	.014*	1-3
	5-8 hours	89	15.78	4.13	16.00	83.13			2-3
	9 hours and above	24	14.00	4.82	14.50	64.10			
Negative emotion component	1-4 hours	57	10.33	3.81	10.00	79.04	1.966	.374	
	5-8 hours	89	10.84	3.60	11.00	87.10			
	9 hours and above	24	11.33	4.03	12.00	94.92			
Cognitive component	1-4 hours	57	11.18	3.24	11.00	100.06	12.783	.002*	1-3
	5-8 hours	89	10.28	3.08	10.00	83.60			2-3
	9 hours and above	24	8.54	2.93	9.00	57.98			
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	1-4 hours	57	56.81	12.88	58.00	96.37	7.138	.028*	1-3
	5-8 hours	89	54.22	11.32	54.00	84.15			2-3
	9 hours and above	24	48.96	15.31	49.50	64.71			

$*p<.05$ (χ^2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

According to the findings in Table 7, there are statistically significant differences between the overall attitude scale towards assistive technologies and the scores of the behavioral component, affective component and cognitive component sub-dimensions in the scale according to the daily working

hours of the teachers (p>.05). The scores of teachers with a daily working time of 9 hours or more in the scale of attitude towards assistive technologies and in the behavioral component, affective component and cognitive component sub-dimensions of the scale were found to be lower than the other teachers. It was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the scores of the negative emotion component sub-dimension according to the daily working hours of the teachers (p>.05).

Results on Special Education Teachers' Classroom Management Skills

Table 8. Special Education Teachers' Scores on Classroom Management Skills

	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Classroom Management Skills Scale	170	135.41	28.81	69	200

The descriptive statistical values related to scores obtained from the Classroom Management Skills Scale by special education teachers are given in Table 8. When Table 8 was examined, it was determined that special education teachers included in the study got an average of 135.41±28.81 points from the classroom management skill scale and it was also determined that the lowest score was 69 and the highest score was 200.

Table 9. Comparison of Special Education Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale by Age Groups

	Age group	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	χ^2	p	Difference
Classroom Management Skills Scale	20-29 years	77	140.42	26.83	148.00	96.80			1-2
	30-39 years	66	128.20	27.71	126.50	71.35	9.579	.008*	2-3
	40 years and above	27	138.74	33.98	139.00	87.87			

*p<.05 (χ^2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

As seen in Table 9, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference between special education teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale scores according to age groups (p>.05). This difference stems from the teachers in the 30-39 age group scored lower than the other teachers.

Table 10. Comparison of Special Education Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale by Gender

	Gender	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	M	SA	Z	p
Classroom Management Skills Scale	Female	88	142.24	26.34	148.50	99.03	-3.715	.000*
	Male	82	128.07	29.69	126.50	70.98		

*p<.05 (Z: Mann-Whitney U test)

Table 10 shows the findings obtained from the Mann-Whitney U test, which was conducted to compare the Classroom Management Skill Scale scores of special education teachers included in the study by gender. According to Table 10, the difference between the scores of the special education teachers participating in the study from the Classroom Management Skill Scale according to their gender was found to be statistically significant and the Classroom Management Skill Scale scores of female teachers were found to be higher than male teachers (p<.05).

Table 11. Comparison of Special Education Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale by Professional Seniority

	Professional seniority	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	χ^2	p	Difference
Classroom Management Skills Scale	1-5 years	63	141.73	25.73	149.00	99.23			1-2
	6-10 years	70	125.59	26.94	125.00	66.91	17.023	.000*	2-3
	11 years and above	37	143.22	32.32	149.00	97.30			

*p<.05 (χ^2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

The results of the comparison of the Classroom Management Skills Scale scores according to the professional seniority of the teachers participating in the research are given in Table 11. It was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the Classroom Management Skills Scale according to the professional seniority of the teachers (p>.05). As it can be seen from the table, Classroom Management Skills Scale scores of teachers with professional seniority between 6-10 years were found to be lower than other teachers.

Table 12. Comparison of Special Education Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale by Educational Level

	Educational level	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	Z	p
Classroom Management Skills Scale	Graduate	142	132.14	27.72	139.00	80.59	-2.416	.299
	Postgraduate	28	137.73	26.05	143.00	89.61		

(χ^2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

Table 12 shows special education teachers' classroom management skills based on educational level and results showed that there is no significant difference between special education teachers' classroom management skills and their educational level (p>0,05).

Table 13. Comparison of Special Education Teachers' Classroom Management Skills Scale by Daily Working Hours

	Daily working hours	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Median	SA	χ^2	p
Classroom Management Skills Scale	1-4 hours	57	137.25	28.44	148.00	91.87	1.724	.422
	5-8 hours	89	134.79	27.13	138.00	83.58		
	9 hours and above	24	133.33	36.04	125.50	77.50		

*p<.05 (χ^2: Kruskal-Wallis H test)

Table 13 shows the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test for comparing Classroom Management Skills Scale scores according to the daily working hours of the teachers included in the study. According to Table 13, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between teachers' classroom management skills according to their daily working hours (p>0.05).

Results on Correlational Analysis between Special Education Teachers' Attitudes Towards Assistive Technologies and Classroom Management Skills

Table 14. Correlations between Special Education Teachers' Attitudes Towards Assistive Technologies Scale and Classroom Management Skills Scale Scores

		Classroom Management Skills Scale
Behavioral component	r	.580
	p	.000*
Affective component	r	.507
	p	.000*
Negative emotion component	r	-.177
	p	.021*
Cognitive component	r	.520
	p	.000*
Attitude Towards Assistive Technologies Scale	r	.519
	p	.000*

*p<.05

Table 14 shows the results on the correlations between special education teachers' scores on Attitudes Towards Assistive Technologies Scale and Classroom Management Skills Scale. It was concluded that there was a positive correlation between special education teachers' general attitude scores towards assistive technology and behavioral, affective and cognitive components sub-dimensions and classroom management skills scores (p<.05). It was also found that there was a positive correlation between special education teachers' general attitude scores towards assistive technology and negative emotion component sub-dimensions and classroom management skills scores (p<.05). According to these results, it can be said that the more positive the attitudes of special education teachers towards assistive technology, the higher their classroom management skills.

DISCUSSION CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of the present study showed that special education teachers generally have a high level of attitude towards assistive technologies. In the light of these results, it can be said that the attitudes of special education teachers towards assistive technologies are positive. When the literature is examined, it was observed that the attitudes of special education teachers towards assistive technologies are generally positive (Kisla, 2011; Onivehu, Ohawuiro, & Oyeniran, 2017; Maich, Rhijn, Woods, & Brochu, 2017). In contrast, Sakallı Demirok, Haksiz and Nuri (2019) revealed that teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies are neither positive nor negative and that the attitudes of teachers working in special education towards assistive technologies are in the range of "Undecided".

Based on these results, it can be said that making practices to eliminate factors such as lack of knowledge about assistive technologies, lack of specialists, lack of financial support, which cause teachers to have negative attitudes towards assistive technologies, will positively increase teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies, thus increasing the quality of assistive technology use in education.

According to the results, special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies showed statistically significant difference based on their age, gender, professional seniority and daily working hours. Similar with these results, Kisla (2008) concluded that teachers' attitudes towards technology increase significantly with the increase in their professional seniority. Kutlu, Schreglmann and Cinisli (2017) concluded that age variable is one of the influential factors on teachers' use of assistive technology. In the light of the results, the fact that teachers' seniority causes them to have positive attitudes towards assistive technologies can be associated with being able to observe the positive results of using these technologies. As the age level decreases, the reason for the positive attitudes towards assistive technologies can be shown as the necessity of the use of technology in the current era. It can be said that the use of technology in the newly developed teacher training programs has been the cause of this situation.

Results of the present study showed that female teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies were more positive than male teachers. When the literature is examined, Bahceci (2019) found that female teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies are more positive than male teachers in his study. On the other hand, Alhossein and Aldawood (2017) found a low-level significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies according to the gender variable.

On the other hand, results also showed that special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies showed no difference according to their educational level. There are contradictory results in the literature regarding these results. Bahceci (2019) found that teachers with higher education levels had a more positive attitude towards the use of assistive technology.

According to the results, special education teachers generally have a high level of classroom management skills. Results revealed that special education teachers' classroom management skills showed statistically significant difference based on their age, gender and professional seniority.

However, special education teachers' classroom management skills did not show any difference according to their educational level and daily working hours. Contrary to the findings of the study,

According to the results of the study, there was a positive correlation between special education teachers' general attitude scores towards assistive technology and behavioral, affective and cognitive components sub-dimensions and classroom management skills scores. In addition, there was a positive correlation between special education teachers' general attitude scores towards assistive technology and negative emotion component sub-dimensions and classroom management skills scores. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are limited number of studies examining the relationship between special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technology and their classroom management skills.

The high classroom management skills of special education teachers enable them to easily manage the problems they encounter in the classroom. It can be interpreted that these skills may cause teachers to experience less stress in the face of classroom problems. It is understood from the regression analysis results that some of the special education teachers' attitudes towards assistive technologies are related to their classroom management skills. Therefore, it is understood that there are other variables associated with the attitude towards assistive technologies.

Recommendations
Based on the results of this research, some recommendations are presented. Arrangements should be made for the provision of assistive technologies according to the needs of teachers, and support services for existing assistive technologies used in schools should be developed. The primary needs of teachers who have individuals with special needs in their classrooms should be determined, and education should be given in the light of this information after the method, where and from whom they want to receive assistive technology training should be determined systematically.

In further research, a training program can be prepared, the purposes of using assistive technologies, the benefits of assistive technologies, and the resources that special education teachers can access to assistive technologies, and then the effectiveness of this training can be tested. Within the scope of this research; Situation determination was made by examining the opinions about the attitudes towards assistive technologies. In advanced research, technical problems and problems in the use of assistive technology can be examined. Quantitative methods were used to collect and analyze data in the research. More descriptive and different findings can be obtained by using qualitative methods and techniques on the same subject.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest
We declare that we act in accordance with ethical principles in all processes of this study. There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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THE REALITY OF COUNSELING PRACTICE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN JORDAN

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan, and to achieve the purpose of the study, the descriptive approach was used, in addition to the use of a questionnaire consisting of (40) items distributed over (4) fields as a tool for the study, which was applied to a sample of (400). male and female students in public schools affiliated to the Jordanian Ministry of Education, in the first semester of the academic year (2022/2023); Where the study concluded that there is a positive counseling practice practiced by teachers of educational and psychological counseling in schools from the point of view of students, in addition to practicing counseling tasks in a positive way; However, the students are affected by these tasks little, due to the educational and psychological counseling teachers not having full powers.

Keywords: Counseling practice, educational institutions, teachers of educational, psychological and vocational counseling.

INTRODUCTION

Counseling, in general, is one of the services that are provided to individuals in cases of psychological suffering or with the aim of helping them to identify their potentials, tendencies, abilities and attitudes, and to understand the nature of the circumstances surrounding them in all its social, economic, cultural, and academic dimensions, which contributes to guiding them towards the right choice and the right decision. Counseling, without a doubt, in educational institutions is one of the means to achieve successful education and psychological health for students.

Undoubtedly, counseling intervention is an important necessity for adolescent students in educational institutions, as many studies indicate the importance of the role of counseling intervention through the presence of counseling and guidance specialists in various educational institutions, starting from the primary stage through the secondary stage, all the way to the university stage at its various levels.

The indicative practice relies on methods to be presented, namely:

First: The direct method in school psychological counseling:
It is the one that is face to face between the counselor and the mentor, and it is often used with individual cases that suffer from problems of the nature of effectiveness and need an investigation that increases self-awareness and acceptance and encourages the client to make decisions to face situations and crises.

Second: The consultative method in school psychological counseling:
And the guide does it by directing the guide to the facilities and institutions in the environment that can benefit from their services such as medical, social, recreational, and vocational services. And his ability to confront Crises, different situations, and decision-making. This method can be supported by

direct services provided by the psychological counselor to develop a positive self-concept of the counselor.

Third: The media method in school psychological counseling:

These are extension services that target large groups of citizens in order to address a widespread problem in a local community or even at the national level, such as the need to pay attention to raising children in a democratic and independent manner to raise the competence of young people in actual terms and encourage innovation, to develop their innovative capabilities, or the need to treat people with disabilities in the same way It is characterized by respect so that they reach an appropriate level of self-acceptance, which contributes to raising their level of adaptation and helps them to turn to life in order to enjoy mental health in addition to any problems.

Models of the indicative process and its stages:

The indicative process goes through a series of stages, each stage includes a set of procedures, and it has been developed in the form of models that describe this process. The following is an explanation of two models: Cormier and Hackney's model, and Hill and O'Brien's model.

  1. (Cormier & Hackney Model):

Cormier and Hackney presented a model for the stages of the counseling process, and this model consists of five stages:

1) building the mentoring relationship, 2) assessing the problem, 3) setting goals, 4) interventions, and 5) closing and follow-up.

The first stage: Building the counseling relationship:

The counseling relationship refers to the psychological climate that is generated from the interaction between the counselor and the counselor, provided that the counseling relationship is based on factors such as mutual respect, trust, and a sense of security and psychological comfort. Although there is no specific pattern for building the counseling relationship, there are some directives and skills such as social skills and the authenticity of the counselor.

The second stage: Evaluating the problem:

This stage includes collecting and classifying information related to the reason that brought the counselor to counseling. The evaluation at this stage depends on two things: the counselor's theoretical and philosophical point of view of human problems, as well as the counseling position with the counselor's understanding of this situation.

The third stage: Defining the objectives of guidance:

It is necessary to identify and evaluate the needs of the counselor from the first session and translate them into special goals that the counselor seeks to achieve accompanying the counselor, and they determine the direction in which the counseling process is going.

The fourth stage: Interventions:

It is intended for the activities and procedures that will achieve the goals of the counseling process. It is therefore an action plan or strategy followed by the counselor for the benefit of the counselor that allows achieving the indicative goals.

Fifth stage: Termination and follow-up:

In this stage, the counselor evaluates the extent to which the counseling goals are achieved, while determining the (psychological) benefits achieved by the counselor, while involving the counselor in developing a follow-up plan that represents the end of this stage. When referring the client to other bodies for follow-up, it is necessary to determine the need for referral, evaluate the possible sources of referral, then prepare the client for the referral, and coordinate its implementation.

As for the follow-up, it is the professional contact that occurs between the counselor and the mentor after the end of the counseling, as this communication is effective and beneficial, especially for those Counselors who think ending counseling is appropriate now, but who may experience anxiety in the

future. The counselor usually suggests a period ranging from three to six months after the end of the counseling to meet the counselor again to confirm his condition, and the phone call at this stage is a kind of follow-up because it provides information about the counselor's condition, noting that it is not always sufficient.

2-(Hill & O'Brien Model, 1999):

It is a three-stage model, which is a framework for using counseling skills in leading and guiding clients during the process of exploring interests and problems, reaching understanding and making changes in their lives. The following is an overview of its stages:

The first stage: The exploration stage :
At this stage, the counselor seeks to make the counselor a participant in the counseling process, enabling him to explore important ideas, feelings, and behaviors. This is done by building a relationship of intimacy and empathy between the counselor and the counselor. As well as encouraging him to talk about his problems and raise his feelings about his problems and pain.

The second stage: The insight stage:
At this stage, the counselor coordinates with the counselor to bring him to an understanding of himself, the reasons for his behavior, his thoughts, and his feelings, and make him aware of them and thus aware of himself and the world around him. The main goal at this stage is to build a new and healthy understanding of himself and the reality of what surrounds him.

The third stage: the implementation stage:
Begins to change thoughts, feelings or behavior. The counselor moves his client towards making decisions and exploring possible new behaviors that suit his new perception. The counselor may teach the counselor the skills he needs to bring about change in the reality of his life, evaluate these changes, and modify plans to achieve them.

School psychological guidance and counseling curricula
Specialists believe that achieving the goals of school psychological guidance and counseling is coordinated through the following three approaches:

The developmental approach: sometimes known as the construction strategy, and its importance is due to the fact that guidance and counseling services are provided mainly to ordinary people to achieve an increase in the efficiency of the individual and to support the compatible individual to the maximum extent possible by taking care of the manifestations of personal growth physically, mentally, socially and emotionally.

The preventive approach: It is sometimes known as the "psychological immunization" approach against mental problems, disorders, and diseases. The preventive approach takes care of the normal before it cares about patients in order to protect them from problems, disorders and mental illnesses through a primary level (trying to prevent the occurrence of the problem, disorder or disease by removing the causes) and a secondary level (trying early detection) and the third level (attempting to reduce the impact of disability, disorder or disease crises), in addition to this, this approach provides vital preventive measures: including general health and reproductive aspects, as well as psychological preventive measures: including care for normal psychological development, skill development and embarrassing periods, and socialization. Social preventive measures: It includes procedures for scientific studies and research, evaluation and follow-up processes, and scientific planning for preventive measures.

The therapeutic approach: includes the treatment of problems and disorderTAnd mental illness until a return to the state of compatibility and mental health, and he cares about theories of disorderTMental illness, its causes, diagnosis, treatment methods, and the provision of counselors, therapists, centers, clinics, and psychiatric hospitals.

Counseling services in the educational institution:

The school seeks to prepare the individual for the future life by discovering his potential and ability to provide an educational and scientific program for the purpose of developing these capabilities in a direction that makes the individual able to serve himself and his community. It also works to facilitate the students' natural growth in the linguistic, intellectual, social, physical and cognitive aspects, but they are exposed to forms of difficulties in school, some of whom are able to cope while others are unable to do so and suffer from poor compatibility.

The counselor works in the school to assist students in their healthy development in general, as counseling services affect the following aspects:

Counselors provide instructions and organize activities in order to help new students get acquainted and get acquainted with the teaching staff within the school, plans for physical education and extra-curricular activity, understand the general framework, curricula, academic subjects and other requirements, get acquainted with the nature of the school and the activities in it, and get to know new and old students and make them feel that they belong to the school. their new school.

Creating and keeping information records about the student's individual growth and educational development, and these records become useful in the student's guidance and guidance process.

- The school provides cultural and professional information for the purpose of enabling the student to choose the scientific and professional curriculum for social events.
- The school is active in the vicinity of vocational institutions in order to provide realistic vocational training for its students, in an effort to guide according to potentials and tendencies, and to prepare the student for the future world of work.
- Organizing recreational and sports school events, all of which serve guidance in terms of being an opportunity to practice professional tendencies and show some of the special potentials of students.

The Study Problem:

Psychologists agree that the adolescence period is characterized by a variety of health-physical, emotional, family, moral-value, social and mismatch problems. This makes the student need psychological assistance to solve the problems he faces, which makes the psychological intervention of the psychological counseling and vocational guidance specialist an urgent necessity in schools.

Counseling is a coordinated basis for training and experience, and those in charge of this task in schools deal with various and many educational problems that are related to all educational fields, as well as aspects that pertain to the student's personality.

The school field also occupies the first place in the list of problems that students suffer, followed by the social, personal, health and economic fields.

The aims of this research are as follows:

"The reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan"

"The reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for the routing task"

"The reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for the evaluation task"

"The reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for the follow-up task"

"The reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for the task of carrying out informational activities".

School guidance and counseling plays an important role in increasing the student's ability to adapt and succeed and avoid many of the problems that students face during their academic journey. Since many educational problems need counseling services: such as academic delay, growth problems, choosing the type of study and specialization, poor compatibility, repeated failure, frequent absences and

dropouts; Where this task is directed in providing these services in educational institutions to specialized educational counselors, as the current study seeks to explore the reality of counseling practice in Jordanian educational institutions; In detail, the sub-questions are as follows:

1. What is the reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan to the task of directing?

2. What is the reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for the evaluation task?

3. What is the reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for a follow-up mission?

4. What is the reality of counseling practice in educational institutions in Jordan for the task of carrying out media activities?

Terminological and procedural definitions:
1- Indicative practice:
Defined by the American Psychological Association (1981): as "those services provided by psychologists and counselors who use principles, methods, and procedures to facilitate effective human behavior throughout their entire lives, with the aim of helping persons to acquire or change personal and social skills, to improve compliance with the changing demands of life, and to enhance skills Dealing well with the environment.

Operational definition

It is a set of services aimed at helping people solve their psychological problems and make decisions that achieve their psychological, social, academic, and professional compatibility, in order to achieve their happiness and effectiveness in life. It is expressed in the total score that is obtained after applying the questionnaire that was built by the two researchers.

METHOD
Study Approach
The method is an applied step or a set of procedures that we follow to study a problem or a phenomenon in order to discover the facts that are related to it, answer a number of questions posed by it, and verify the validity or denial of its hypotheses, as the researcher is not considered free to choose the method he uses, but the nature of the studied phenomenon or The nature of the research subject matter determines the quality of the methodology used, and the methodology, whatever its type, means the method followed by the researcher to study the problem under study.

Since the subject of our study is reality Counseling practice in educational institutions, the approach that suits us is the descriptive approach because it "depends on studying the phenomenon as it exists in reality, describing it accurately, and expressing it quantitatively or qualitatively."

The Study Sample
The sample is to select and withdraw a group of individuals from the original community, then apply the study to this part of the community, and then try to generalize the results to the original community from which this sample was drawn.

Accordingly, the study sample consisted of (400) male and female students, and this sample was chosen by following the steps of the stratified random sample, given that each school represents a class of the original society.

Data Collection Tools
The researcher needs certain tools to collect the necessary data and information for his study, as the nature of the study problem, its hypotheses, and the objectives to be achieved are determined by the tools that the researcher should use without others. In it, giving an idea about the questionnaire and

motivating the students to answer in an explicit and objective manner, as we explained to them that the answer will only be used for the purposes of the study.

Where the Counseling Practice Scale was used, which was prepared by the two researchers, and this scale consisted of four dimensions, which are as follows: After Guidance (consisting of 10 paragraphs); After the evaluation (consisting of 10 paragraphs); and after follow-up (consisting of 10 paragraphs); And after practicing media activities (consisting of 10 items). They are matched by the following alternatives and their weights: always (5), often (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), never (1).

The designed scale was characterized by satisfactory validity and reliability, and accordingly, it was reassuring to apply this tool on the study sample.

RESULTS

Presenting the result of the general question of the study, which states: "What is the reality of counseling practice in Jordanian educational institutions?"

In order to answer this question, the arithmetic mean, theoretical mean, and standard deviation were extracted for the answers of the study sample, which were as follows, as shown in Table (1):

Table 1. Shows the result of the general question.

	The number of sample members	SMA	Theoretical Mean	Std.Dev.
Indicative practice	400	138.22	78	4.45

It is clear from the above table that the arithmetic mean value of the counseling practice was estimated at 138.22 and a standard deviation of 4.45, which is higher than the theoretical mean, which was estimated at 78, which indicates a high level of counseling practice among the study sample. The number of individuals whose practice was higher than the theoretical average is estimated at 85% Which indicates that the majority of the sample practice well the counseling tasks formulated in the form of the prepared questionnaire.

Presentation of the result of the sub-questions of the study, which states: "What is the reality of counseling practice in Jordanian educational institutions for the tasks of guidance, evaluation, follow-up, and media?"

In order to answer these questions, the arithmetic mean, theoretical mean, and standard deviation were extracted for the answers of the study sample, which were as follows, as shown in Table (2):

Table 2. Shows the results of the sub-questions of the study.

	Mission	The number of sample members	SMA	Theoretical Mean	Std.Dev.
Indicative practice	Guidance	400	24.88	24	6.79
	Evaluation	400	23.55	21	4.10
	Follow-up	400	37.22	27	3.85
	Media	400	40.66	27	4.33

It is clear from the above table that the arithmetic mean value for the orientation task was estimated at 24.88 and a standard deviation of 6.79, which is higher than the theoretical mean, which was estimated at 24. The arithmetic mean value for the assessment task was estimated at 23.55, with a standard deviation of 4.10, which is also higher than the theoretical mean, which was estimated at 21. It also

shows that the arithmetic mean value for the follow-up task was estimated at 37.22, with a standard deviation of 3.85, which is also higher than the theoretical mean, which was estimated at 27, and the arithmetic mean value for the media task was estimated at 40.66, with a standard deviation of 4.33, which is also higher than the theoretical mean, which was estimated B 27, which also indicates a high level of all counseling tasks among the study sample.

Analyzing and Discussing the Results

Through the presentation, we conclude that the counseling practice is present in a strong manner and with all its elements in schools, and this indicates that teachers of psychological and educational counseling are achieving on the ground positive in their work as educational counselors.

As for field observation, this result does not agree with many widespread and increasing phenomena. Such as the phenomenon of smoking, drugs, failure, dropouts, and immoral manifestations prevalent in front of schools.... The results of the study are also not in line with the statements and observations of the teachers themselves, as they complain about the lack of tests and the lack of powers granted to them, as teachers constantly demand to grant more powers to counseling teachers. Education, the provision of tests, the involvement of the teacher in the various decisions related to the school, and they also demand the inclusion of information classes within the educational organization. All these demands contribute to the good conduct of the educational counselors' tasks.

However, the reason for obtaining this high level of extension practice may be an attempt to camouflage or the teacher's reluctance to express the actual level of extension practice for fear of being judged, although it is justified by the lack of a legal and professional framework for his work.

Recommendations and suggestions

1. Correcting the misconception about counseling and guidance services, such as believing that they are ready-made advice and plans that are provided to the counselor. Rather, it is a process that includes motivation, showing the true motives of the counselor, and helping him to understand himself and achieve himself in the light of realizing his capabilities.

2. Providing training for mentors, benefiting from the results of empirical research in the same field.

3. Expanding the provision of psychological counseling services to all stages of study, to include nursery, primary, intermediate, secondary and university on the grounds that they are not additional, but rather necessary services within educational institutions if these institutions and decision makers have the ambition to make the educational institution a major source of effective human capital.

4. Taking into account the changes taking place in the different societal systems (family, school) and society in general, so that cultural change and technological progress are taken into account, especially the means of communication and media.

5- Emphasizing the importance and role of the counselor in the educational process by defining detailed tasks for him and defining the objectives of these tasks for the educational institution according to a national vision for a successful educational policy.

The Limits of the Study:

The current study is determined by teachers of psychological counseling in the schools of the Jordanian Ministry of Education during the academic year (2022/2023).

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the work is written with due consideration of ethical standards. The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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TIJSEG

Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counseling   2023, volume 12, issue 1

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SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

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Abstract

This study considered some demographic factors as predictors of social skills development of pupils with learning and intellectual disabilities in primary schools in Ibadan North area of Oyo State. Purposeful random sampling technique was used to select the three schools from the special schools in the area, and three public schools to select pupils with learning disabilities, three instruments were administered on the participants. The data collected were analyzed using multiple linear regressions. The result indicated that both socioeconomic status and gender are social factors that could predict the social skills development of pupils with learning and intellectual disabilities. Likewise, degree of intellectual disability and age were influencing factors for social skills development of pupils with learning and intellectual disabilities. The implications were stated while the recommendations were highlighted.

Keywords: Gender, pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities, socio-economic status, the development of social skills development.

INTRODUCTION

The development of social skills is essential in the life of every individual. It is the foundation for easy acquisition of other skills whether academic or functional skills that any individual might want to acquire in life. A social skill is a component of adaptive behaviour necessary for effective functioning of an individual in society. Social skills include interpersonal relationship, responsibility, self-concept, self-actualization, self-esteem and following rules and regulation. Social skills are defined as a set of behaviour that allows individuals to initiate and maintain positive social relationship, contribute among peers, demonstrate self-acceptance and allow for effective coping (Rutherford, Quinn, & Mathur, 2004). It can also be defined as a complex set of skills that include communication, problem-solving, and decision making, assertion, peer and group interactions and self-management (Kolb & Hanley Maxwell, 2003).

Humphrey and Wiglesworth (2012) maintained that social skills are very important as it were and have also been found to relate to other important domains of development such as mental health. However, lack of social skills is a major characteristic of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. Its acquisition have been found to be germane in the developmental processes by which children learn to act and respond appropriately while having social interactions and to maintain a healthy relationship among others (Ogden,

TIJSEG

2015). Though there are many categories of learners with special educational needs, this study only focused on two high incidence disabilities which are intellectual and learning disabilities.

Social skills are all the things that we should do and say when we interact with people. They are specific abilities that allow a person to perform competently at particular social task. Social skills are the ability to perceive and interpret social situation, generate an appropriate social responses and interact with others (Smith, 2007).

Intellectual Disability (ID)

Intellectual disability on one hand is a disability characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour which covers many everyday social practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18 (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disability AAIDD, 2010). Intellectual disability is a particular state of functioning that starts in childhood; it is characterized by limitation in both intelligence and adaptive skills.

Pupils with intellectual disability have some physical characteristics which make them socially incapacitated. They have slow development and some physical problem as a result of their physical characteristics (Adams & Oliver, 2011). In view of this, the development of social skills has been a difficult task for them. However, emphasis on social skills has been overshadowed by academic skills among pupils with cognitive impairments like those with intellectual and learning disabilities (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003). Meanwhile, there is need for an increased emphasis on the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities in order to promote their social competence and functioning in the society. The development of Social skills enable all categories of children including those with intellectual and learning disabilities access education, choose friends and maintain effective relationships. Without the adequate development of social skills, pupils with intellectual disability will not be able to fit in appropriately into social contexts where they can be assisted to learn daily routines and competencies necessary for them to be self-reliant (Oladimeji, 2017).

Learning Disability (LD)

Learning disabilities, a heterogeneous group of several specific disabilities, is a condition that, despite the lack of other problems, such as intellectual disability or emotional or behavioural disorders, causes significant learning problems, most often in areas related to reading and writing (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, Lipsey, & Roberts, 2002). Learning disability is a neurological disorder which includes the presence of significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, or learn new skills, a reduced ability to cope independently, that is an impaired social functioning that starts before adulthood with a lasting effect on development, (Royal College of General Practitioners, 2010).

Lazarus (2009) defined learning disabilities as a condition when despite having a normal intelligence quotient, students experience substantial underachievement in learning. It is often presented as a significant discrepancy between the student's potential and ability where all other impairments are ruled out. Children with learning disabilities are as smart as or smarter than their peers, but they may have difficulty reading, writing, spelling, and reasoning, recalling and/or organizing information if left to figure out issues by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

One of the common and defining characteristics of learning disabilities is deficits in social skills (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). The development of social skills of pupils with learning disabilities had been slowed down with various factors irrespective of the fact that policies and practices had been put in place for their educational achievement. Social skills instruction is a critical educational component for many pupils with learning disability. Some of the long term effects caused by lack of social skills can be: classroom management problem, delinquency, peer rejection, emotional difficulties, and lack of peer acceptance, problems with interpersonal relationship and low social status and esteem.

Studies in the past have shown that learning disabilities are a heterogeneous group of problems, that comprise difficulties experienced by learners in the acquisition of different school skills, for instance difficulties in reading, (recognizing or deciphering words, reading fluency and understanding), written expression, (handwriting, spelling, text formation) and mathematical abilities. Such problems are frequently experienced by the same pupils and may occur concomitantly alongside other disorders, such as attention disorder or distraction or social or emotional deficits (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007; Smith, 2008).

It is quite true that not all pupils with learning disabilities have problem with the development of social skills, but some of them have deficit in social skills and even find it difficult to develop social skills effectively. Kavale and Moster (2004) maintained that one of the key factors for defining characteristics of learning disabilities is lack of social skills. Pupils with learning disabilities often display social ineptitude and have difficulties making and maintaining friendships. Their social and behaviour problems become more visible than their academic problems as they grow. They also manifest anti-social behaviour, immaturity, and other social skills problems such as difficulty giving feedback, negotiating, and showing resistance to peer pressure. These social problems are evident during the preschool years when they mostly experience strong feelings of loneliness (Bryan, Brustein, & Ergul, 2004). This problem does not end during the preschool years as it persist through adolescence when they manifest the feelings of rejection and display inadequate development of social skills (Le Mare & de Ronde, 2000).

Socio-demographic Factors and The development of social skills among Pupils with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities

The variables of interest explored in this study are: the socio-economic status of pupil's parents, the degree of disability (whether mild or severe), gender and age. When educators assist pupils to develop academic and social skills that are necessary for effective functioning in their immediate environment and in society generally, one of the variables often considered is the socio-economic status of the pupils' family. Demarest, Reisner, Anderson, Humphrey, Farquhar, and Stein (1993) posited that a family socio-economic status is based on family income, parental education level, occupation and social status in the community, such as contact within the community, group association and the perception of the community about the family. All these impact a pupil's life either negatively or positively. Various studies have confirmed the influence of socio-economic status on self-concept and other areas of development in children and adolescents (Komos & Kiddle, 2013).

Socio-economic status positively relates to behavioural health in every age-group and social context in which it has been studied. At every level of socio-economic status, health and well-being are usually better at the level above and poorer at the level below (Gnanadevan, Selvaraj, & Sivakumar, 2015). Trembley, (1999) also averred that youth from higher socio-economic status backgrounds exhibit fewer internalizing and externalizing problems, fewer social skills deficits, and higher life satisfaction. Pupils from families where parents have less education and low socio-economic status tend to systematically perform worse than pupils from families where parents are educated and of high socio-economic status (Ahmad & Khan, 2012). Socio-economic status could affect the development of social skills of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. It also has serious impact on the behaviour of children with intellectual and learning disabilities and their acquisition of appropriate social skills (Oladimeji. 2017). Hoghton (2010) reiterated that the state of the home affects children a lot since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life.

Zheng, Chen, Li, Du, Pei, Zhang, Ji, Song, Tan, and Yang (2012) found a significant relationship between socio-demographic factors and intellectual disability. Sirin (2005) reported that a medium to strong SES-achievement relation existed. Lareau (2011) conducted an in-depth observation of black and white middle-class, and poor families and found that socio-economic class makes a difference in the lives and futures of American children. Thus, there is a strong and stable correlation between socio-economic status and children's academic achievement and cognitive development. Shonkoff and Garner, (2012) reported that

early experiences and environmental influences can have a lasting effect on learning (linguistic, cognitive and socioemotional skills), behaviour and health. Higher levels of emotional and behavioural challenges, such as social problems, delinquent behaviour sign, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder among teenagers, are linked to lower levels of SES (DeCarlo, Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011; Russell, Ford, Williams, & Russell, 2016; Spencer, Kohn, & Woods, 2002)

The degree of intellectual disability could also affect the development of social skills of pupils with intellectual disability Oladimeji (2017). The severity of the condition is assessed across three main domains, namely, conceptual, social and practical. Basically, the degree of retardation a pupil experiences varies; this calls for classification because there are individual differences within the population of intellectual disability is often defined in terms of severity of condition. Educators still classify pupils with intellectual disability as mild (educable), moderate (trainable), severe and profound. Another classification of the degree of intellectual disability is the British classification. According to this classification:

1) Mild intellectual disability also referred to as educable -They have Intelligence Quotient between 55 and 69. They are able to read, learn practical life skills and function in social setting. They do not display obvious characteristics of ID. Their condition becomes noticed when there is need for learning.

2) Moderate intellectual Disability also known as trainable. They have Intelligence Quotient between 40 and 54. People in this category have fair communication skills; they can effectively participate in self-care activities and adjustment at home. They have difficulty in social situations and problems learning social cues.

3) Severe intellectual disability. Their Intelligence Quotient is between 25 and 39. They have pronounced developmental delays, they have problem living an independent life. They need serious supervision to participate in social situations.

4) Profound intellectual disability. They have Intelligence Quotient below 25, most people in this category have problem living an independent life. They live in homes or hospitals in most cases under the supervision and guide of a caregiver (AAIDD, 2010).

According to the Learning Disability Association of Ontario (2020), despite the absence of a formal standard to measure what can be regarded as mild, moderate or severe learning disabilities the following can be considered to determine the degree of a learning disability:

1. The number of skill areas affected by learning disabilities. That is, does learning disability affect academic, social, life skills or behavioural skills?

 ii. What is the severity of the deficit in psychological processes and the degree of impairment in the skills areas affected by the learning disabilities?

 iii. To what degree does the impairment inhibit with the individual's everyday functioning, despite appropriate intervention/remediation (in different academic skills, life skills, and social/behavioural skills?

It can be said that on a general note, the more skill areas are affected, and the higher the degree of impairment, the more severe the learning disabilities is. For instance, a pupil with phonological processing problems may experience difficulty learning to decipher word, but after basic reading abilities are learned, he or she might be able to read. He or she will, however, continue to require a longer time to read and comprehend texts. This would be in line with a mild case of learning disabilities. In contrast, if a student has difficulties in a number of psychological processes, such as working memory, processing speed, phonological processing, and language processing, there could be remarkable impairment in many academic skills associated with these processes, such as oral communication and listening comprehension, reading, decoding as well as reading comprehension, spelling, and writing, understanding the language of

mathematics, remembering instructions, and completing mental computations. Because of the major impairments in these areas, the learning disabilities will certainly affect most of the other academic subjects (including arithmetic), as well as daily communication and social functioning, making it severe (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2020).

Gender is very crucial in the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. It is a factor that needs serious consideration in the assessment, treatment and development of social skills of pupils at different age and skills level. Gresham and Elliot (1990) in their investigation on gender differences on social skills discovered that girls scored higher than boys in test of social skills. Several studies have indicated that girls are more active when it comes to some social activities like turning taking, personal fantasy and small group activities while boys prefer to engage themselves in large group physical activities, playing football and different types of rough play (Walker, 2005).

The effect of gender on learning and achievement is constructed by culture. Girls are expected to behave passively in western societies while boys are expected to be active and curious to the point of getting themselves into trouble (Schrum & Geisler 2003). Literature has shown that the development of social skills and behavoiural problems often differ by gender, while girls are likely to develop higher social skills and display high academic competence, boys have often more behavioural problems and lack social competence (Keane & Calkins, 2004; Margetts, 2005). Sasikala and Swarnakumari (2019) examined the influence of gender differences on social skill, problem behaviours and academic competencies of children with mild intellectual disability based on their teacher and parent ratings in inclusive education. It was found that females obtained higher scores than males on social skills.

Age differences play a key role in the development of social skills of pupils. Social skills give pupils a wide range of benefits. Researchers from Penn State and Duke University discovered that children that listen, follow rules, cooperate and engage in better sharing activities are likely to graduate to college and that good social skills can assist kids in having a brighter future. In another study, it was discovered that the development of appropriate social skills in pupils can predict success in adulthood (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Pupils' social and emotional development is critical to overall success in school and life. Children with developmental delays experience significant social difficulties due to their learning and behavioural differences. As children mature, there are expectations of the various developments of social skills they are to exhibit.

Statement of Problem
Traditionally, emphases on the development social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities have been overshadowed by academics skills. Therefore, there is need to investigate to what extent the selected socio-demographic variables namely, socioeconomic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, age and gender predict the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities.

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised and answered in the study.
    (1) What is the relationship between socio-economic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, gender and age to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?
    (2) What is the composite contribution of socio-economic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, gender and age to the development of social skills of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

(3) What is the relative contribution of socio-economic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, gender and age to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

(4) Will there be any significant difference in the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

METHOD

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised primary four to six pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. The sample comprised 107 primary four to six pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities (53 males and 54 females) between the ages of 10 and14. Three public special schools were purposefully selected to get the pupils with intellectual disability and three public regular education schools to select pupils with learning disabilities. All the students were screened with Slooson Intelligence Test to determine their Intelligence Quotient (IQ).

Consequently, pupils with learning disabilities had IQ ranging between 80 and 110 while pupils with intellectual disability had IQ ranging between 69 and 24. Forty-three (43) pupils had mild learning disabilities, thirteen (13) moderate learning disabilities, Five (5) severe and one (1) had profound learning disabilities. Also, fourteen (14) pupils had mild intellectual disability, five (5) had moderate intellectual disability, fourteen (14) had severe intellectual disability and twelve (12) had profound intellectual disability.

Instrumentation

Socioeconomic Scale (SES)

The socioeconomic status (SES) scale by Salami (2000) was used to measure the socio-economic status of the participants. The scale was used to elicit response from the participants about the educational qualifications, occupation and social status of their parents or guardians for the purpose of this study. The reliability coefficient obtained by the researchers after a pilot testing exercise using 10 pupils with learning disabilities and 10 pupils with intellectual disabilities who were not part of the study, is 0.73. This was considered to be reliable.

Slosson's Intelligence Test (SIT)

Slosson's Intelligence Test was used to determine the IQ of the pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. It is a screening instrument for children and adult and a measure of ability and a test of general intelligence. It was published by Richard Slosson in 1963, revised in 1981, 1990, 2002 and 2005 respectively by Nicholson, Terry, Hibpshman and Larson. The interpretation manual was first published in the year 1990 and revised in 1998, 2002 and 2006 respectively. The reliability coefficient ranged from .90 to.98 depending on the participants' age. The instrument was given to experts to peruse in order to determine the content validity. The reliability coefficient was obtained after a pilot study conducted using 10 pupils with intellectual disability and 10 pupils with learning disabilities who were not part of the respondents; the result was .73 which ascertained the reliability of the instrument.

Attitude to Social Skills Scale (ATSSS)

This scale was developed by the researcher**.** It was used to measure the development of social skills and attitude of the participants towards social skills. The scale consists of 20 items with modified likert 4-point scale of Strongly Agreed, (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was trial tested at a special school and a regular education school, both in Ibadan, Nigeria, to ascertain its validity and reliability. The reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. The instrument was designed and used in the year 2017 by one of the researchers to screen for the attitude of pupils with intellectual disability towards social skills development.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the relationship between socio-economic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, gender and age to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

Table 1. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between social skill development, Socio-Economic status, Age, Degree of Intellectual and Learning disabilities, and Gender.

	Social skills dev.	SES	Age	Degree of ID	Degree of LD	Sex
Social skills dev.	-					
SES	.172 (.077)	-				
Age	-.130 (.183)	.131 (.180)	-			
Degree of intellectual disability	-.267* (.005)	-.009 (.928)	.145 (.136)	-		
Degree of learning disability	.436* (.000)	.341* (.000)	-.036 (.713)	-.114 (.244)	-	
Sex	.158 (.104)	.248* (.010)	.180 (.063)	-.178 (.067)	.182 (.061)	-
Mean ($\overline{x}$)	51.2897	24.6822	16.8785	1.5888	.8224	1.5000
Std.Dev.	8.1241	5.1718	.6828	.8236	.8882	.502

* Sig. at .05 levels

Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between the development of social skills and degree of intellectual disability (r=-.267, p(.005)<.05), and Degree of learning disability (r=.436, p(.000)<.05), but there was no significant relationship between the development of social skills and socio-economic status (r=.172, p(.077)>.05), Age (r= -.130, p(.183)>.05), and Gender (r=.158, p(.104)>.05)respectively.

Research question two: What is the composite contribution of Socio-economic status, Degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, Gender and Age to the development of social skills of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

Table 2. Regression Analysis showing the composite contribution of Socio-economic status, Degree of Intellectual and Learning disabilities, Age and Gender to the Development of social skills of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities.

R	R Square		Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.521	.272		.236	.1033		

A N O V A

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	1899.891	5	379.978	7.531	.000*	Sig.
Residual	5096.128	101	50.457			
Total	6996.019	106				

*p<.05

Table 2 above shows the composite contribution of socioeconomic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, age and gender to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. The Table 2 also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation (R = .521 and a multiple R^2 of .272. This means that 27.2% of the variance was accounted for by five predictor variables when taken

together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at p<.05. The Table 2 also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded F-ratio of 7.531 at .05 level of significance. This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables (socioeconomic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, age, and gender) to the dependent variable (the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities) was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research question three: What is the relative contribution of socioeconomic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, age and gender to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

Table 3. Regression Analysis showing the relative contribution of Socio-economic status, Degree of Intellectual and Learning Disabilities, Age and Gender on the Development of Social Skills of Pupils with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta Contribution**		
(Constant)	67.322	17.278		3.896	.000
Socioeconomic status	.103	.147	.065	.697	.487
Age	-1.097	1.054	-.092	-1.041	.301
Gender	.473	1.506	.029	.314	.754
Degree of learning disability	1.557	1.128	.170	1.380	.171
Degree of Intellectual Disability	-2.184	.776	-.345	-2.813	.006

*p<.05

Table 3 reveals the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights, viz: Socio-economic status (β = .065, p>.05), Age (β = -.092, P >.05), Gender (β = .029, p>.05) while Degree of intellectual disability (β = -.345, p<.05) had significant relative contribution that is, could significantly and independently predicts the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities in the study, Degree of learning disability (β = .170, p>.05) had no significant relative contribution to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities.

Research Question four: Will there be any significant difference in the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities?

Table 4. Independent t-test showing the difference in the Development of Social Skills of pupils with Intellectual and Learning disabilities.

Social skills dev.	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	Crit-t	Cal-t.	DF	p value
Learning disability	62	54.84	7.7865				
				1.96	6.159	105	.000*
Intellectual disability	45	46.40	5.7224				

*p<.05

Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference in the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities (Crit-t = 1.96, Cal.t = 6.159, DF = 105, p<.05 level of significance). The result shows that pupils with learning disabilities obtained higher mean scores ($\bar{x}$ =54.84) than those with intellectual disability with mean score of ($\bar{x}$ =46.40) in the development of social skills, implying that pupils with learning disabilities tend to develop social skills more and better than pupils with intellectual disability in the study.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of the research question one as revealed on Table 1 shows that there is a significance relationship between the development of social skills and degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, but there is no significant relationship between the development of social skills and socioeconomic status, gender, and age respectively. Table 2 reveals a significant composite contribution of the independent variables (socioeconomic status, degree of intellectual disability, degree of learning disabilities, gender, and age) to the dependent variable (the development of social skills) among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. This implies that socio-economic status, degree of intellectual and learning disabilities, gender and age impact on the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities either positively or negatively. This is in line with the findings of Lareau (2011) which states that there is a strong and stable correlation between socio-economic status and children's academic achievement and cognitive development. However, the finding negates the submission of Shonkoff and Garner (2012) who reported that early experiences and environmental influences can have a lasting effect on learning (linguistic, cognitive and socioemotional skills), behaviour and health. Result of the third research question as shown in Table 3 indicates that socio-economic status, gender, age and degree of learning disabilities had no significant relative contribution to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities, while degree of intellectual disability had a significant relative contribution, that is, it made the highest relative contribution to the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. This means that the independent variables all have implication on social skills development of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. This result is in agreement with the findings of Zheng et. al (2012), that there is a significant relationship between socio demographic factors and intellectual disability but the degree of intellectual disability could significantly and independently predicts the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. This further indicates that the degree of intellectual disability should be given proper consideration in teaching the development of social skills among pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. Table 4 also indicates that there is a significant difference in the development of social skills of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities. Pupils with learning disabilities develop social skills more and better than pupils with intellectual disability. This is simply because pupils with intellectual disabilities learn at a slow rate compared to their counterparts with learning disabilities.

Conclusion
The development of social skills of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities is determined by their gender, age, socioeconomic status of their parents and degree of intellectual and learning disabilities. It is evident from the findings of this study that socioeconomic status, age, gender and degree of learning disability had no significant relative contribution to the social skills development of pupils intellectual and learning disabilities, but degree of intellectual disability is significant in predicting the social skills of pupils with learning and intellectual disabilities.

Recommendations
Based on the above findings, it is recommended that teachers and parents of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities should work hand in hand to see to the development of social skills of these pupils at home and at the school front. Social skills training should be incorporated into the curriculum of pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities irrespective of their, age, gender and the degree of intellectual and learning disabilities.

Concerted efforts should be made by teachers to encourage the parents to daily build on social skills the pupils might have been exposed to at school when they are back home. Educational agencies and curriculum planners should flood their curriculum with topics that can help pupils with intellectual and learning disabilities come across necessary social skills per day which will form the bases on which other learning

materials are centered. Learning appropriate social skills will help them learn other skills necessary for their effective performance especially in academic skills.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

Ethical procedures in conducting the study were adhered to by the researchers and they declare that no conflict of interest exists.

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PEER-PRESSURE AND SOCIAL-MEDIA AS PREDICTORS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Teenage pregnancy in this day and age has increased amongst schoolgirls. This could be due to peer pressure and exposure to the social media. This study investigates Peer pressure and social media as predictors of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State. Using descriptive survey design, multistage sampling was done to select 100 schoolgirls with an age range of 13-19 across selected secondary schools. Teenage Pregnancy and Peer Pressure Questionnaire (TEPAPP-Q) and social media and Sex Questionnaire (SMAS-Q) developed and validated were used to collect data. Data collected was analyzed using frequency count and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Findings revealed peer pressure (F-ratio=.5863; p<.05) and social media (F-ratio=.3716; p<.05) to have significant effects on teenage pregnancy among the participants, while peer pressure show greater influence. Conclusively, a climate that is sensitive to sexual identity development and appropriate health information is necessary. Early counselling orientation on the impact of succumbing to pressure and parental guidance to avoid abuse of the social media were recommended.

Keywords: Peer-pressure, social-media, teenage pregnancy, adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy has become one of the very common challenges among adolescents in Nigeria. Teenage pregnancy occur within the ages of 13 to 19 and about half of these pregnancies are by chance and definitely not by choice as more than half end in abortion, unfortunately, in an unsafe conditions. An estimated 3.9 million girls aged 15 to 19 go through dangerous abortions ending in pregnancy related complications (Kassa, Arowojolu, Odukogbe, & Yalew, 2018; Ojo & Asebiomo, 2019). The negative consequences and outcomes tends to cause stigmatization and entrenched stereotyping as pregnant teenagers are not likely to continue their career path, secure a job or finish school (Alabi & Oni, 2017; Mathewos & Mekuria, 2018). The world Health Organization (WHO) are committed to constant advocacy, and capacity building of adolescents and are constantly collaborating in global partnership with a collection of stakeholders to empower at least 120 million women and girls to have access to contraceptives by the year 2020.

The transit from childhood to teenage may be coloured with insecure emotions, in some cases, this could result to complex immature and negligent behaviours. Teenage has to do with age which is between 13 to 19 and ending there, while adolescence is an adjective that describes the stages a child experiences during the period of teenage age. It represents the transitional phase of growth and development cognitive abilities and social interactions between childhood and adulthood which is characterized by rapid physical growth

and development, with notable emotional intensity such as anger and sadness (Reitsema, Jeronimus, van Dijik, & de Jonge, 2021) and social changes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2021), described the adolescent as any person(s) who is within the ages of 10 to 19years. This critical developmental period is usually understood as the years between the onset of puberty and the establishment of social independence (Allen and Waterman, (2019). During the passé of early adolescence, physical changes become rapid, changes in attitudes and behaviour are also observed. The many physical, sexual, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that happen during this period come with anticipation and anxiety for both adolescent and family connectedness (Odimegwu & Mkwananzi, (2018).

The first phase of adolescent development is the period of establishing a sense of autonomy (Allen and Waterman, 2019), as they make effort establishing emotional independence from parents. A lot of adolescents at this stage usually have passionate quarrels with their parents and significant others as they struggle to acquire extra independence. A lack of affection and attention from home is a recipe for a teen to seek love outside the home and attention from the opposite sex. Less time is craved with family as against the cherished time with peers. The struggle at this period is characterized by same-sex peer groups with a reduction in commitment to family activities and a lack of adherence to parental influence. At the mid- adolescent stage, they initiate passionate love relationships. It is not uncommon for adolescents to have crushes on adults during this stage. There is a development of emotional aptitude (the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions) and social competence (the ability to successfully relate with others), otherwise referred to as emotional intelligence, which is the ability to identify and manage own feelings and the feelings of others (Molokwu & Olabisi, 2020).

At emotional development stage, they cultivate the ability to think abstractly, fall in love, go through the experience of infatuation and become interested in romantic and sexual relationships. This stage is bedeviled with the incidence of unwanted and unplanned pregnancy which has become a worrisome situation in our society today as it constitutes a health hazard to both the mother and the fetus. This infatuation is built on imaginary audience or make-believe audience (peers) that are observing them. Appearance at this age, is paramount subsequently, unhealthy sexual awareness is ventured into exposure to drugs, and the resultant consequences is an unwanted pregnancy (Mathewos & Mekuria, 2018). A number of risk factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy include unsafe sexual engagement, abuse of contraceptives (Iyanda, Dinkins, Osayomi, Adeusi, Lu & Oppong, 2020), risks associated with multiple intimate partners, drug/substance use and misuse, deprivation, truancy and low family income or single parent family. It further leads to disruption in academic pursuit and contributes to school dropout (Ayamolowo, Ayamolowo & Odetola, 2020).

Peer pressure is a factor that is worthy of note when it comes to teenage pregnancy. Molokwu (2022) submitted that this is a very potent factor as peers evidently form social groups and norms to which members are expected to conform. As they are constantly pre-occupied with how they appear to others, they constantly worry about the way others perceive them as a result, they express their vulnerability through keen interest in appearance measured in clothing, hair-dos and language. The bearing and pressing pressure to belong to and fit in with peers is constantly, demanding a necessity to act, look, think or behave in a certain ways so as to receive approval, validation and appreciation from peers, and a sense of being accepted by friends and peers. The peer group, often through a naive attachment wields a strong influence on the adolescent's development. Secondary school years is a period of dramatic personal, social, and cognitive change where peer pressure is prevalent. Socio-demographic characteristics are usually the strongest predictors of friendship formation. Peer groups which is typically a same-sex group, have unique capacities to encourage negative or positive behaviour in their members.

Social media became an essential and integral part of the adolescents' life in this millennium. It is used in different sectors and domains like in health, education and communication. It includes Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Snap chat, Telegram and a host of others which uses the internet. The swelling trends in the use of social media and influence of peer pressure are among the understandable concerns of adolescence, especially with the incursion of the covid-19 pandemic (Mufta, 2022) and the required lockdown of schools which necessitated the discard of face- face teaching and learning and replaced with the e-learning. It has regrettably influenced the taste and desire for fashion and trends among teenagers. They become victims of a number of unpleasant consequences like internet obsession, cyberbullying, anxiety, pornography addiction and sleep disorders. Alfakoro, Yahaya and Abdul, (2021) posits that depending on the side it falls on, social media wields negative and positive impacts.

Many youth are now addicted to watching movies on the social media in the process they get exposed to sexthings and pornography in the social media, and as a consequence become prone to engaging in practical carnal activity and as a result, they end up in committing abortion (Onasoga & Arunachallam, 2018). The resultant effect on education is the truncation of academic activities and syllabus, increased health risk particularly for the special needs child, isolation, and rejection by family members and in some cases, lack of affection and care from both parents and family.

A physical manifestation of the consequences of constant use of or addiction to social media is discomforts from prolonged immobility and decreased exercise. This inactivity in life style could cause increased weight gain and fear of missing out and not fitting in among peers. Therefore, the researcher is motivated to undertake this study in order to determine the effects of peer pressure and media on teenage pregnancy among secondary school adolescent girls in Ibarapa Division of Oyo.

Statement of the Problem
Teenage pregnancy has become a recurrent issue in Nigerian society as it has a direct implication on school dropout among girls and a subsequent contributor to the disparities experienced in the education of both girls and boys. Despite the extensive attention given to adolescent sexuality and teenage pregnancy in the last two decades, the incidence has not abated and many adolescent mothers often experience a lack of equal career opportunities and a high rate of unemployment. Social-Media networks possibly will make Adolescents susceptible to taking risky choices or decisions, which consist of but are not limited to risky sexual behaviour, alcohol, drugs, and violence. Oftentimes, the sexual behaviour of teenagers is traceable to quest and drive to experiment the dictates of peer pressure.

The twenty-first century is a digital age characterized by exposure to social media, information and communication technology. The love for adventure exposes them to unhealthy sexual behaviours through the social media. Some of them visit sites with explicit contents and as such are predisposed to the urge to experiment what they see and watch. The risk of maternal and prenatal health is of apprehension for both the pregnant teen and the health sector as the frequency of premature birth and low birth weight is prevalent amongst teenage mothers.

A teen mother to be (the pregnant teen) could easily be exasperated and prone to violence in order to overcome grief and distraught feeling of failure and suicide. Ordinarily, pregnancy predisposes to hypertension, anemia combined with prolonged labour and the severe complications associated with early pregnancy and complications. On the long run, the education is disrupted and the teen stigmatized. The consequences is that the teen may never return to school but may live with the burden of guilt and regret. Resting on this backdrop, this study set out to investigate the effects of peer pressure and social media on teenage pregnancy among adolescents' in selected secondary schools in Oyo Town.

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study was to investigate peer pressure and social media as predictors of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State and in precise terms to:

1. Determine the peer influence on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State.

2. Examine the influence of social - media on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State.

Hypotheses
Two hypotheses were tested:
i. There will be no significant effect of peer influence on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State.
ii. There will be no significant effect of media on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State.

METHOD
Research Design
The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. Multi-stage sampling was adopted for the study. Two of the three local governments were randomly selected while 12 schools were selected from each of the two local government (5 schools from each local government).

The Participants
The population of this study comprised all female students between the ages of 13 and 19 years in secondary schools. Ten (10) female students were randomly selected from each of the twelve schools. A total of one hundred (100) female secondary school students participated in this study within Ibarapa Division of Oyo State, Nigeria. Ibarapa Division has three local government areas namely Ibarapa East, Ibarapa Central and Ibarapa North Local Government Areas.

Research Instrument
The research tool through which responses were elicited from the respondents according to the variables that were tested in the hypotheses. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A is the bio-data of the participants; Section B is 9-item Teenage Pregnancy and Peer Pressure Questionnaire (TEPAPP-Q) which uses two likert scale (Yes=1 and No=2) and seeks to elicit response on how peer pressure influence the participants to be involved in sexual activities while Section C is the 8-item Media and Sex Questionnaire (MAS-Q) which uses three-likert scale (Never=1, Once in a while=2 and Often=3) and elicit response on participants use of the media/internet to access sexually explicit contents.

Reliability and Validity
These questionnaires were developed and validated by the investigator. Face validity was done on the instrument by the researcher and other experts in the field. The reliability of the instrument was calculated using Kudas Richardson method with reliability coefficient of 0.72 considered reliable for use.

Procedure for Data Collection
The researcher assisted by research assistants administered the questionnaire in selected secondary schools within the study area after seeking the permission of the school principals. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to participants and retrieved after they had been filled.

Analysis of Data
The data collected was analysed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The significance level was taken as .05 in the study.

RESULTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants included in the study are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' socio-demographic data

| Class | AGE | | |
	13-15 years	16-19 years	Total
JSS 1	4	2	6
JSS 2	14	4	18
JSS 3	18	16	34
Subtotal	**36**	**22**	**58**
SS 1	6	16	22
SS 2	2	18	20
Subtotal	**8**	**34**	**42**
Total	**44**	**56**	**100**
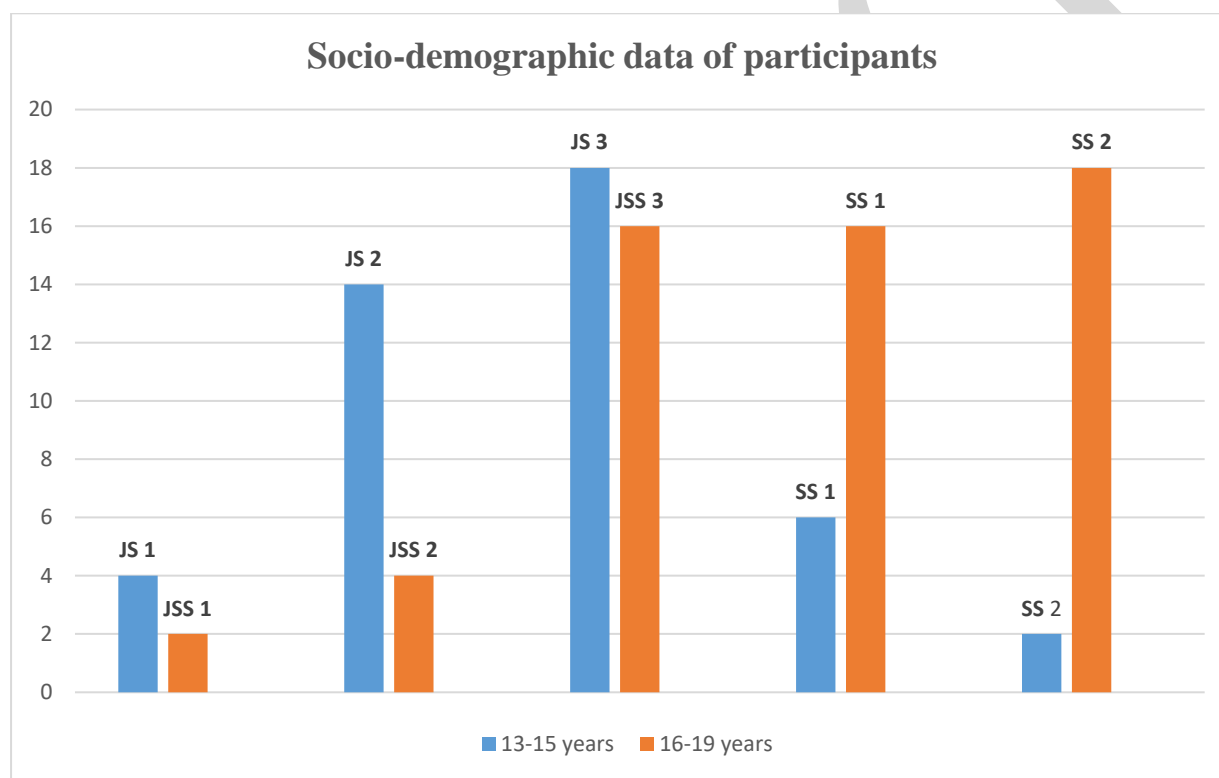
Figure 1. Bar chart showing participants socio-demographic data

Table 1 above and the bar chart show the participants' socio-demographic data in terms of age and class. The table show that 36 of the participants in Junior Secondary classes were within the age range of 13-15 years were in while 22 were within the age range of 16-19 years. Table 1 also show that participants in Senior Secondary classes within the age range of 13-15 years were 8 while those within the age range of 15-19 years were 34. The table further shows that more participants (56) were within the age range of 16 -19 years than those (44) within the age range of 13-15 years. This data shows that most of the participants were matured adolescents in JSS 3, JSS 2, SS 1 and SS 2.

In order to test the first hypothesis of the research, "There will be no significant effect of peer influence on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State", ANOVA test was applied to the data. ANOVA test result is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of effect of peer influence on teenage pregnancy.

Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std Error of the Estimate	
1	.209[a]	.044	.034	6.397	
ANOVA					
Source of variation	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig**
Regression	183.959	1	183.959	4.495	.037[b*]
Residual	4010.681	98	40.925		
Total	3294.390	99			

a. Dependent variable: Teenage pregnancy
b. Predictor: (Constant) Peer Pressure
*Significant at .037

Table 2 above which has two parts shows the model summary and ANOVA. The model summary reveals an R-square (i.e. the coefficient of determination) of 0.44. This means the proportion of variance of the dependent variable (teenage pregnancy) account for 44% of the difference in the independent variable (peer pressure). The table further shows the analysis of variance of peer influence on teenage pregnancy. It shows that F-ratio (4.495) is greater than the level of significance (0.037) i.e. [F (1, 98) = 4.495; p< 0.037]. Therefore, the null hypotheses is rejected. Peer influence therefore influenced teenage pregnancy in the study area.

In order to test the second hypothesis of the research, "There will be no significant effect of media on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State", ANOVA test was applied to the data. ANOVA test result is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Effect of Media/Internet on Teenage Pregnancy

Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std Error of the Estimate	
1	.205[a]	.042	.032	6.404	
ANOVA					
Source of variation	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig**
Regression	175.909	1	175.909	4.290	.041[b*]
Residual	4018.731	98	41.007		
Total	4194.640	99			

a. Dependent variable: Media/Internet
b. Predictor: (Constant) Peer Pressure
*Significant at .041

Table 3 above which has two parts showing the model summary and ANOVA. The model summary reveals an R-square (i.e. the coefficient of determination) of 0.42. This means the proportion of variance of the dependent variable (teenage pregnancy) account for 42% of the difference in the independent variable (media/internet). The table further reveals the analysis of variance of effect of media on teenage pregnancy. It shows that F-ratio (4.290) is greater than the level of significance (0.041) i.e. $[F_{(1,98)}=.352; p<.041]$.

Therefore, the null hypotheses is rejected. Media therefore have significant effect on teenage pregnancy in the study area.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Being an investigation into the effects of peer pressure and media on teenage pregnancy in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State, the researcher found that though both peer pressure and media had significant effects on teenage pregnancy of adolescent girls, peer pressure exerted greater effect than media. This finding is consistent with that of Ojo and Asebiomo (2019) who reported that adolescents spend more time with peer groups more than with their parents, as a result, they often choose and decide to conform to their peers desires and expectations. The findings of Isuku, (2015) in an earlier research found that cliques are formed and distinguished through the extent of influence wielded, such as affiliation to socio-demographic characteristics as predictors.

The study also revealed that exposure to social media is a causative variable tin the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Going by the submissions of Pikhart and Botezat,(2021), the social media indisputably have a positive use however, some of the sites may well be misused and abused by teenagers through viewing lascivious and sensuous related lurid pop-up (advertisements), explicit images and video clips. This is similar to what has been reported in earlier studies and it is expected because adolescents are active users of the social media. The findings of Molokwu, (2022) collaborated the findings of Pikhart and Botezat, (2021). Further, that peer pressure added to misdemeanors which is in consistency with the reports submitted by Osuntuyi, Ireyomi and Aluko (2021) that unaccepted norms displayed by young ones are as a result of impact of peer pressure caused by lack of parental positive presence.

The accessibility to internet was also found to be a significant contributor to cybercrime in the study area. This finding is consistent with Oloworekende (2019) who reported that e various social media platforms have also help in sustaining the practice of cyber fraud as most of online personalities also known as online influencer's are in one way or the other linked to the lifestyle of fraud. Flaunting their ill-gotten wealth over the various social media platforms and reiterating the notion of hard work which is mostly referred to as fraud or scamming is used to mount pressure on most youth massively to engage in all. This finding is corroborated by the work of Mushwana, Monareng, Richter and Muller (2015) whose surmise is that access to sexual content in music, movies, television and magazines had an influence on early sexual activity among the young. It has allowed numerous adolescents to come across like-minded individuals for intellectual support and it has also fortified healthy way of life through peer influence, and also acting as a basis of stress relief and entertainment.

Social media undoubtedly is a double-edged sword, particularly relating to peer pressure amongst adolescents. It is a getaway route for stressors, am avenue to pick up both positive and negative hobbies. The inability to get constant money to buy data for recharge could make a teenager tilt towards pilfering and theft. It is imperative to concede the benefits of social media, but the hazards cannot be disregarded (Molokwu, 2022). Enhancing adolescents' inner strength is effective at lessening problematic behaviors, such as addiction to Internet (Shek, 2020). The inextricable usefulness of school guidance counsellors, the involvement of parents and teachers tilt towards instilling explicable expected moral ideology. For example, positive youth development programmes in schools and societies might possibly enhance this ability (Shek, 2021a ; Shek. 2021b). Furthermore, schools play active role in averting possible harm by integrating into education an online fraud and virtual dating formal curricula. Teachers also can do more to encourage healthy communications and facilitate productive peer connections.

On the way forward, it is vital for us to make certain that we are cultivating in adolescent users knowledge of these risks and empowering them to take cognizant actions and informed decisions devoid of yielding to peer pressure. The findings of this study concluded that: Teenage pregnancy can be as a result of the

influence of the negative impact of social media and the negative influence of peer pressure among in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State. Against this backdrop, recommendations were made below:

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings in the study:

i.   Female students should receive early counsel and orientation on the danger that lurks around the social media and the internet and especially on how their choice of peers and friends can impact negatively on their lives.

ii. Parents should monitor the changes, interest in courting, intimacy, and sexual related conducts of these teens as they grow and develop.

iii. A climate tha is sensitive to individual issues, sexual identity development and also sexual orientation, is necessary to create a comfortable atmosphere where diverse types of sexual related topics, imaginations, interests and appropriate health information about avoiding risk-taking behaviour, such as drug use and unsafe sexual behaviour, is important and should be provided by all stakeholders.

iv. It is also pertinent to introduce skills that will develop and enhance capacity to handle and proffer solutions to challenging circumstances with peers, and career guidance.

v.   Since pregnant adolescents experience stigmatization, negligence of care and access to adequate health care services, the need to review health delivery and planned interventions services by the Government for those with abortion complications becomes imperative.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study offer some valuable and thought-provoking awareness with respect to investigating peer pressure and social media as predictors of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State. However, the study has some limitations which might have implications for further research. First is limitation of sample size of the study as it was carried out only among teenagers in secondary school in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State.

Second, is that the study used measures that could make the correlation among the variables to be exaggerated by common method variance also, the respondents could have tended to offer responses that were socially right. Consequently, future researchers may design better scale structure together with the outline of results which may need substantiation using a grander representative sample comprising of several cultures, since the study conveyed a continuum to the knowledge base that support ethnically pluralistic environment.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

As the authors of this study, we declare that we collected data in accordance with ethical rules during the research process and acted in accordance with all ethical rules. We also declare that there is no conflict among the authors.

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WHO (2021). Covid-19 disease in children and adolescents: scientific brief, 29 Https//Apps.Who.Int/Iris/Hande/10665345575. Appendices: A Study on Effects of Peer Pressure and Media on Teenage Pregnancy among Secondary School Adolescent Girls in Ibarapa Division of Oyo State

TIJSEG

Appendix 1

INSTRUCTION
This is a questionnaire for the above study. Information provided is intented for academic purpose and kept confidential. Please fill as applicable.

SECTION A
BIO-DATA

Age: 13-15 years ( ), 16 -19 years ( )

Class: JSS 1 ( ), JSS 2 ( ), JSS 3 ( ), SS 1 ( ), SS 2 ( ), SS 3 ( )

SECTION B
TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND PEER PRESSURE QUESTIONNAIRE (TEPAPP-Q)

SN	Statement	Yes	No
1.	There is nothing wrong in being influenced by my friends.		
2.	At times, I have done some things because others dared me to.		
3.	If my friends are drinking, I will also like to have a drink.		
4.	I am being influenced by my friends to doing things I wouldn't do normally.		
5.	Some of my friends want to have sex because a lot of people of their age have already had sex.		
6.	I have been friends with some people, just because others liked them.		
7.	I have gone to parties, just to feel I belong.		
8.	I often do things just to be popular with the people at school.		
9.	At times, I have hung out with some people, so others wouldn't think I was unpopular.		
10.	I feel pressured to have sex.		

SECTION C
MEDIA AND SEX QUESTIONNAIRE (SMAS-Q)

SN	Statement	Never	Once in a while	Often
1.	I have a social media account.			
2.	I see pornography on social media.			
3.	I have watched explicit sexual content on television sometimes.			
4.	I have read sex stories.			
5.	I have friends who watch sex on their phone.			
6.	I have never seen a sexual video before.			
7.	I can search and download anything on my phone.			
8.	I do what I like with my phone anytime I want.			

EXPLORING MOROCCAN UNDERGRADUATES' VIEWS ON DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN EFL CLASSES: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

In 2022, the new minister of Moroccan Higher Education and Scientific Research amended the LMD (License, Master, Doctorate) system to ensure the implementation of soft skills (Miraoui, 2022). As soft skills gain greater recognition in education reform, this study aimed to examine how EFL students at the Ben Msik faculty of Letters and Humanities perceive the role of these skills. The study involved conducting a focus group interview with 22 students from this faculty in the Casablanca-Settat region of Morocco to gather insights. Based on the students' responses, the five most significant soft skill development strategies to be incorporated into EFL classrooms were discussions and debates, voluntary work and community service, virtual platforms and exchange, making presentations, and projects.

Keywords: Moroccan higher education, soft skills, EFL students, soft skill development strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Investing in education is crucial for a developing nation like Morocco to support its economic development goals. To generate a pool of competent and flexible labor in a competitive global market, it is important to prioritize soft skills training. Soft skills, such as effective communication, collaboration, and sharing of ideas, are highly valued by employers (Hawkins & Winter, 2006). Research also shows that soft skills are just as important as hard skills for landing entry-level jobs and predicting success, salaries, graduation rates, and home ownership (Pritchard, 2013).

To ensure that students are prepared for a range of future vocations, Moroccan universities need to incorporate soft skills training into every course design. The Ministry of Moroccan Higher Education has undertaken a number of reforms, including the Bachelor system (2019), to improve the quality of university education in the country (Ministère de l'éducation Nationale, de l'enseignement Supérieur de la Formation des Cadres et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2019). However, the new Moroccan minister

of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Abdellatif Miraoui, recently postponed the introduction of the Bachelor system and made significant changes to the LMD (license, Master, and Doctorate) system to include practicum, coaching, and service learning (Miraoui, 2022).

Given these changes, it is important to examine students' perceptions of soft skills in the context of higher education in Morocco, specifically EFL education. This qualitative study aims to answer several questions, including the most important soft skills to include in EFL classes as perceived by undergraduates, strategies for developing these skills, who is responsible for soft skill development, and the best integration model of soft skills in EFL education. The study will focus on EFL undergraduates in the Ben Msik faculty of Letters and Humanities at Moroccan universities.

1. What soft skills do undergraduate students perceive as the most important to be incorporated into EFL classes?What are the strategies to develop soft skills as perceived by undergraduates?

2. Who do undergraduates perceive as being responsible for the development of soft skills?

3. How can soft skills be effectively integrated into EFL education?

Literature Review

Soft Skills and Hard Skills

Soft skills play a critical role in enhancing the application of hard and technical abilities in the workplace. Achieving a balance between soft and hard skills enables individuals to effectively address challenges and seize opportunities in pursuit of individual, team, or organization-focused objectives (Truong, 2016). According to James and James (2004), soft skills complement and strengthen hard talents, and possessing both is essential for creating purposeful and understandable workplace situations. Therefore, it is crucial to distinguish between soft skills and hard abilities.

Kantrowitz (2005) defines soft skills as non-technical, trans-situational skills that include problem-solving, communication, personal attributes, work ethic, and interpersonal and collaborative abilities. Soft skills are executed in the intrapersonal and interpersonal domains and enhance the use of technical skills and knowledge in the workplace. Similarly, Newell (2002) categorizes soft skills as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which are all manifestations of emotional intelligence. In contrast, hard talents are characterized by logical reasoning, rigorous analytic thinking, and strategic long-term vision, which are all aspects of cognitive intelligence.

Weber et al. (2009) further explain that soft skills are interpersonal, human, people, or behavioral skills that are necessary to use technical knowledge and abilities in the workplace. In contrast, hard skills pertain to the technical facets of performing a task and require information acquisition. They are typically cognitive in nature.

Soft skills are essential non-technical abilities that encompass interpersonal and intrapersonal skills necessary for successful performance in a variety of settings, according to Hurell et al. (2012). In contrast, hard skills, defined by Hutchinson and Brefka (1997), refer to job objectives, academic background, and work experience. Robles (2012) elaborates on this distinction, defining soft skills as interpersonal qualities involving character traits, attitudes, and behaviors, which are distinct from technical ability or job-seeking knowledge.

On the other hand, Klaus et al. (2007) define hard skills as the factual and technical knowledge required to perform a specific job. While hard skills are necessary for the effective use of technical abilities and knowledge, Klaus et al. (2007) also emphasize the importance of soft skills as non-technical traits and behaviors that facilitate a more effective application of technical abilities and knowledge. In fact, they believe that soft skills complement hard skills and are equally important for career success. As Klaus et al. (2007) note, "you can have all the technical expertise in the world, but if you can't sell your ideas, get along with others, or submit your work on time, you'll get nowhere."

Hard skills are skills that can be acquired through training and experience, while soft skills are non-technical and can be challenging to develop. The acquisition of soft skills can lead to personal growth and development. Unlike hard skills, soft skills are experience-based rather than rule-based, with a greater focus on people rather than technical aspects. They are also more versatile and transferable, making them applicable in a wide range of settings (Truong, 2016).

Therefore, possessing both soft and hard skills is crucial for producing competent and job-ready professionals. Even if a person has the necessary hard talents, lacking the soft ones can hinder their ability to navigate the workplace and achieve significant progress.

Developing Soft Skills

Tevdovska (2015) explores strategies to integrate soft skills into foreign language learning and teaching, particularly in English language courses. These strategies include task-based and problem-solving activities, which encourage students to use the target language to resolve a given problem. Group activities such as talks and debates foster communication and interpersonal skills, while ethical concerns pertaining to professional life are discussed to develop decision-making skills. Other activities include presenting oral and poster displays, simulations of meetings and interviews, and feedback sessions with colleagues, subordinates, and superiors to develop effective communication skills in the workplace. Although these approaches are not exhaustive, they are effective and engaging, making them ideal for introducing undergraduate students to soft skills training.

Andrievskikh and Lapina (2021) conducted a descriptive study and proposed recommendations for integrating the development of soft skills into university English language classes. One of the suggested methods for enhancing soft skills is by participating in debates. Debates provide students with the opportunity to practice communication, active listening, and presentation skills, as well as to collaborate effectively by using arguments to support their viewpoints. Through debates, students naturally engage in active collaboration, taking turns to express their ideas in depth. Additionally, students are equipped with collaborative skills by engaging in project work early on, receiving step-by-step instructions and useful recommendations to facilitate their progress.

Caeiro-Rodriguez et al. (2021) conducted a study on the promotion and instruction of soft skills in higher education institutions across five European countries. The study provides an overview of best practices, with a particular emphasis on technological solutions that facilitate the development of soft skills. One section of the questionnaire focused on students' perceptions of instructional strategies used to teach soft skills. The results showed that respondents in the fields of engineering and economics rated "problem-based learning" as the most effective educational strategy, followed by "thinking-based learning," "design thinking," and "competency-based learning." Conversely, cooperative learning, gamification, and the flipped classroom were ranked as the least effective strategies.

Moustadraf (2021) conducted a study in the Moroccan context to examine the value of soft skills from the perspective of engineering undergraduates. A total of 255 students from four universities in Morocco completed a questionnaire to provide data for the study. The results indicated that students acquired more soft skills through active teaching methods, in contrast to the traditional academic model. Furthermore, when asked to rate the most effective pedagogical methods for soft skills development, students identified group work, internships, problem-solving, role-playing, case studies, flipped classrooms, lectures, and project-based learning as the most important strategies.

In a study conducted by Azmi (2018), the impact of an English language environment supported by ICT on intercultural interactions and the development of soft skills among Moroccan students was analysed. The study evaluated the influence of ICT-enhanced teaching materials and content on intercultural exchanges and personal development through focus group interviews with the participating students. The results indicate that the majority of respondents agreed that the use of ICT provides a platform for discussing global concerns and encourages the dissemination and exchange of global ideals in the EFL classroom. Additionally, students believe that the integration of online web content and apps such as videos, podcasts, blogs, and photographs enhances the effectiveness of class delivery.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

In light of the study's objectives, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate methodology. The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research often hinges on the use of words (qualitative) versus figures (quantitative) or closed-ended questions (quantitative hypotheses) versus open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions) (Creswell, 2014). By employing a qualitative approach, this study seeks to elucidate the most crucial soft skills in EFL classrooms and identify effective strategies for their development.

Among the available qualitative designs, a case study approach was selected for this study. The aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding, discern meaning, and grasp the perspectives of EFL students. A descriptive case study was specifically chosen to provide a detailed overview of the soft skill development strategies perceived by the students. To narrow the scope, participants were selected solely from the Ben Msik Faculty of Letters and Humanities English Department, located in Casablanca. This site was chosen by the researcher for accessibility and participant selection purposes after obtaining their consent. This enabled the researcher to provide an in-depth description of the situation and perceptions of the EFL students.

Participants

The study involved the participation of 22 Moroccan EFL students from the Ben Msik Faculty of Letters and Humanities located in the Casablanca-Settat region. Given the small scale and qualitative nature of the study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants. In this type of sampling, which is commonly utilized in qualitative research, researchers manually choose instances to be included in the sample based on their perception of their typicality or possession of specific qualities being sought. This allows researchers to construct a sample that meets their specific requirements (Cohen et al., 2018)

The case study involved a group of 22 EFL students from the English department of the Ben Msik faculty of Letters and Humanities. As per Creswell's (2014) recommendations for qualitative research, the number of participants was deliberately kept low to facilitate data collection and analysis, and to avoid superficial results. To be eligible for the study, participants had to fulfill two criteria: (a) they had to be students at the Ben Msik faculty of Letters and Humanities, where the study was being conducted, and (b) they had to be enrolled in the English department. Initially, a list of EFL S1, S3, and S5 students was obtained, and their respective timetables were acquired from their teacher. Following this, the researcher visited each group and invited students to participate in the study. Seven S1 students, seven S3 students, and eight S5 students expressed interest in participating. To ensure that the participants possessed relevant knowledge and could offer useful insights, they had to meet specific criteria, namely:

- display an interest in soft skills debates in higher education
- demonstrate sociability and exhibit some soft skills
- have previous involvement in community service and projects

By fulfilling these criteria, the participants were well-equipped to contribute meaningful perspectives to the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of EFL students at the Ben Msik faculty of Letters and Humanities in Casablanca regarding the significance of soft skills in EFL classes and the most effective soft skill development strategies. The study utilized focus group interviews as a data collection method. Focus groups are group interviews where participants discuss a specific topic, and the emphasis is on the group's interactions, producing a communal perspective rather than an individual one. This method allows participants to communicate with one another instead of solely with the interviewer, allowing for the emergence of a variety of perspectives. Additionally, the participants' agenda takes precedence over that of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018). Due to the nature of the study, it was not feasible to observe the performance of soft skills or use surveys to identify the most important ones or suitable development strategies.

The researcher conducted the interviews in English, using open-ended questions to allow the participants to freely express their thoughts and perceptions. The interviewees were also given time to reflect on their answers. To ensure that the interviews were conducted appropriately, an interview protocol outline was utilized. The interviews, which lasted about an hour each, were conducted on-site at the Ben Msik faculty, as per the participants' preference, and scheduled in advance based on their availability. The researcher collected handwritten notes and audio recordings of the interviews, with the participants' prior consent obtained for the recordings. While the researcher did offer the option of using their native language if they could not fully express themselves in English, all participants opted to communicate in English throughout the interviews.

Data Analysis Procedure

Firstly, after each interview was completed, the collected data was transcribed. This process was initiated the day after the interview, or at most within three days of its completion. Each recorded and transcribed interview was appropriately labeled to facilitate computer filing. As recommended by Creswell (2014), duplicate copies of the transcribed interviews were preserved.

Secondly, a summary of each interview was composed after reviewing the transcribed information. The summary was then sent to participants over WhatsApp to confirm the accuracy of the material and provide any further details or revisions to their initial comments. This approach was in accordance with Creswell's member checking approach (2014) to ensure the accuracy of the data. All participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcribed interviews, with one student requesting that additional information be added to their response. The response was adjusted accordingly based on their recommendation.

To begin the analysis, the data needed to be coded. This process involved segmenting and categorizing the various texts based on topics or themes. To expedite this process, computer-assisted coding software QDA Miner Lite was utilized. The researcher studied all the different codes and groups and reduced them to between 25 and 30 codes, as recommended by Creswell (2014). The coding process entailed dividing sentences into categories and assigning a term to each category.

To achieve the objective of conveying the findings in a systematic manner and demonstrating in-depth knowledge of the study's issue, it was necessary to create codes that would generate themes. According to Creswell (2014), codes should be condensed to five to seven themes, as information emerges from themes to address the research objectives.

Strategies for Validating Findings

In this study, three tactics were employed to enhance the validity and credibility of the qualitative research, namely member checking, external auditing, and reflexivity (Creswell, 2014). Member checking involved providing participants with the summary of the transcribed information from their interviews and requesting that they confirm its accuracy. External auditing was the second tactic used in the study. An external auditor with extensive research experience was asked to review the final report to identify any biased or subjective statements. To ensure confidentiality, the auditor signed a confidentiality agreement. As the researcher, reflexivity was also employed to be aware of possible biases and preconceptions regarding the study and its outcomes. In addition, the external auditor conducted the interview and recorded the researcher's responses to recognise and address any biases.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Emergent Themes from the Data Analysis
Important Soft Skills in EFL Classes

In the interviews, participants were asked to name the most crucial soft skills that need to be integrated in EFL classes. The frequency with which respondents identified these soft skills was utilised to rank them in descending order. The results are shown in Figure 1.
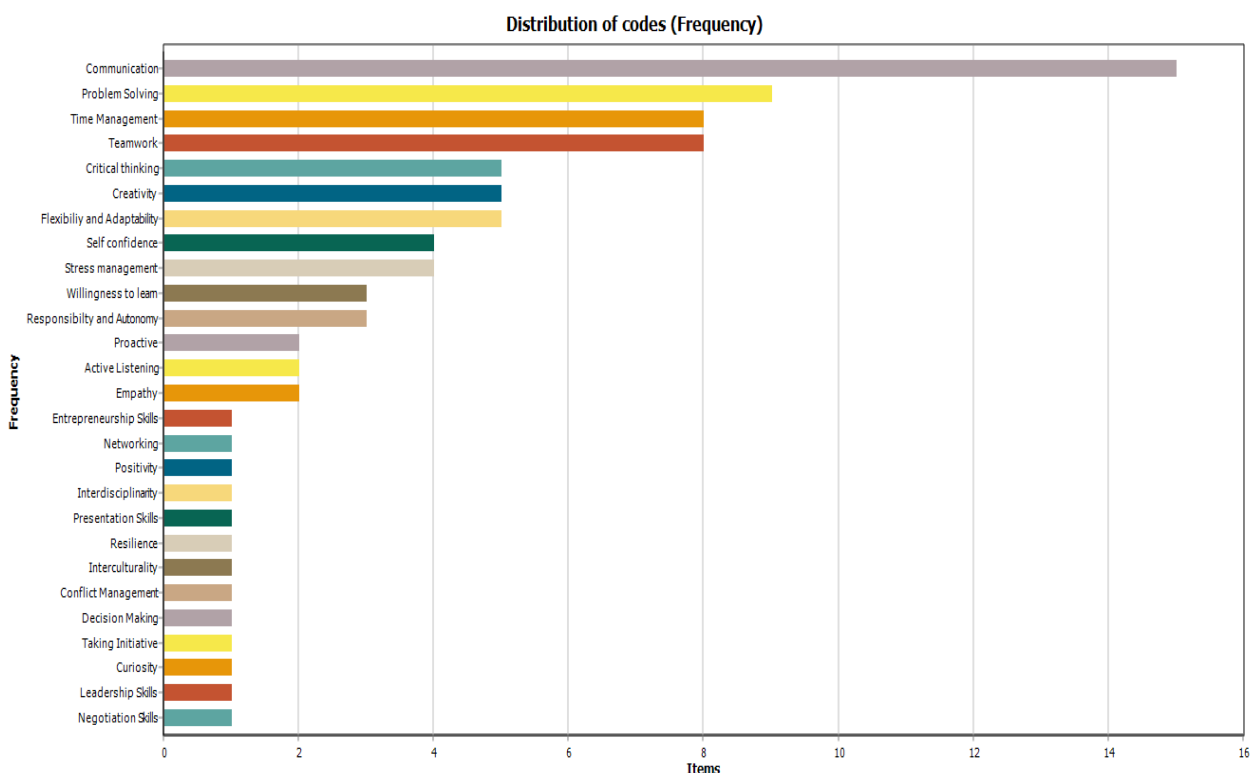
Figure 1. The Most Important Soft Skills in EFL classes

The majority of participants selected communication as the most essential soft skill to be incorporated in EFL classes explaining that it helps in communicating with classmates, teachers, becoming fluent in English and being employable.

P2: "Also, communication is important because we need to sell our skills, when we work in companies we need to communicate and we need have some meetings and even communicate with our customers and quickly understand them."

Problem solving and time management were rated after communications as the most important soft skills in EFL classes explaining that students may face problems when learning English in the workplace or in their daily lives where they have to find suitable solutions. As for time management, respondents believed that time-management skills are essential for doing a lot of activities and tasks on time and even for one's everyday life.

P2: "Also, solving problems is also an important soft skill. How to deal with obstacles in our professional and daily lives." P1: "First of all I think that problem solving which means analytically and creatively solve problems when you face unexpected challenges because we learn a foreign language so we have to expect the unexpected."

P5:" I think that the most important soft skill is to manage our time. Time management because when we manage our time we will read more we will have a lot of things and do many activities." P4: "Also, there is time management because it helps us to take control of our day or to achieve or our most important or urgent tasks." P7: "First of all, time management because if students learn how to organize their time they can be better students and improve their skills like inside the academia and they can be like better individuals like as a whole and it is a good base to start with."

Teamwork and critical thinking were ranked after time management. Some respondents stated that the combined efforts of people in a team result in working toward a goal and a stronger sense of team spirit. Critical thinking was ranked as important because students face complex flow of ideas and need to

analyse situations in the workplace. Many participants chose creativity because they need think outside the box and to find ways instead of being spoon-fed in the classroom. Also, flexibility and adaptability are important because flexibility is necessary in order to adapt knowledge and skills to different contexts at the university or the workplace.

P1: "Teamwork is important if you are working in a team, you could do many things in a short time and also you will work with your friends to achieve many goals."

P4: "There is critical thinking, the most important thing that we need this year to use to analyse and bring new ideas."

P2: "Then, I would also go with creativity, you have to create ways, find ways that are more creative not just a paper pen way."

P1: ". The last soft skill is adaptability as it does not always go as planned so we have to always expect the unexpected and deal with it."

Self-confidence and stress management were ranked the same. Some participants opined that self – confidence is important for sharing knowledge in different contexts. Stress management is important as people face the challenge of working under stressful conditions nowadays which may hinder their efficiency and effectiveness.

P 2: "Also, self-confidence is important, because if we have lack of confidence, we can't share our knowledge."

P2: "Nowadays, working in a company and having a lot of tasks to do can be very stressful, so we have to learn how to manage our stress in order to be efficient rather than effective and work efficiently."
Willingness to learn responsibility and autonomy were ranked the same. Three participants stressed on the fact that being motivated to learn is another important soft skill in EFl classes. Also, being an autonomous and responsible learner who is capable of self-development is of high importance in the EFL context. Proactive, active listening and empathy were ranked after autonomy and responsibility as important soft skills. The last soft skills were ranked the same. Entrepreneurship skills, networking and positivity, interdisciplinary, presentation skills, resilience, inter-culturality, conflict management, decision making, taking initiative, curiosity, leadership skills and negotiation skills each was chosen by a participant.

P5: "Also, we have desire as another important thing because when we have desire we can achieve anything we want. Also, to be competent because when have competence, we will have knowledge."

P2: "Because we need some people who are responsible"

P2: "We need to have this kind of student who is proactive because we need to create a leader in the future"
P2: "when I think about sot skills when it comes to English learning as a foreign language, I would start with empathy as teachers you have to understand that your students are just beginners and you have to have empathy for them."

P2: "Networking is also important because when we have a good network, we can find a lot of opportunities and currently big companies started to use artificial intelligence."

P4: "Besides, positivity is also important because in our daily lives we are not all the time happy sometimes you find yourself under pressure and you have family problems and you find hope. So, positivity is very important to live."

Strategies of Soft Skill Development
The study aimed to elicit ways for developing soft skills in EFL programs, specifically in soft skills education. Respondents offered several strategies for developing soft skills, with many highlighting the importance of conducting discussions and debates in EFL lessons. Additionally, participants noted the
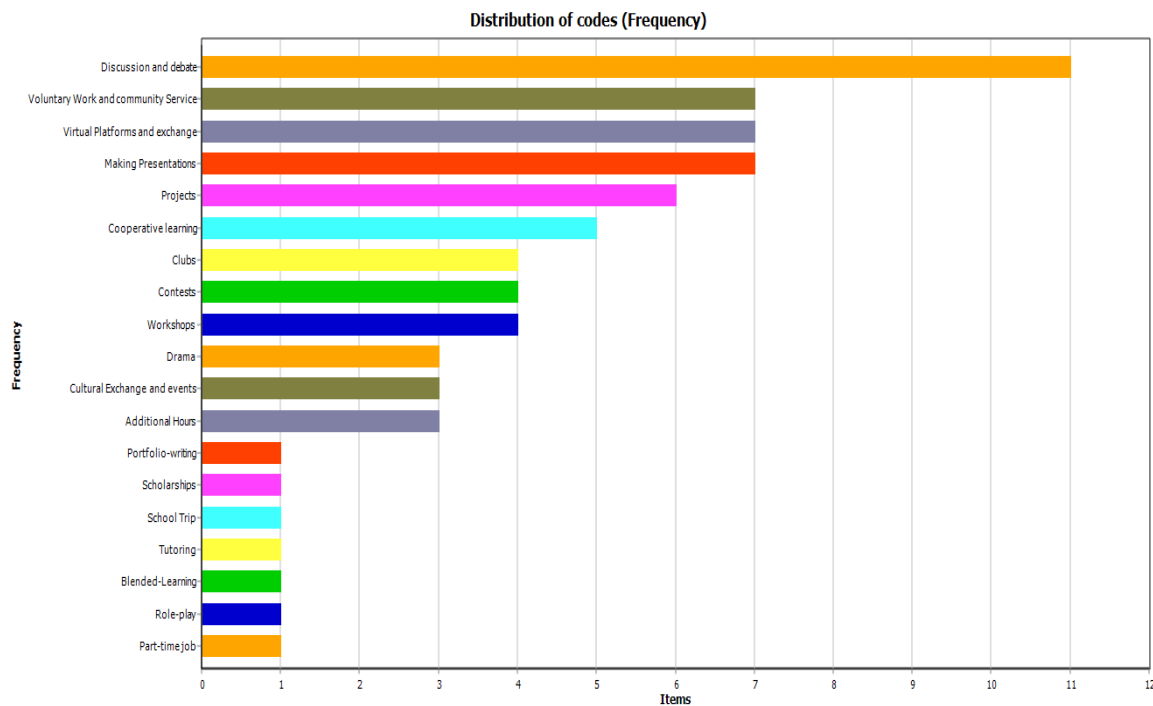
Figure 2. Strategies of Soft Skill Development

significance of voluntary work and community service, virtual platforms and exchange, making presentations, and engaging in projects, with some sharing personal anecdotes of how they developed various soft skills through these methods. Cooperative learning was also identified as an effective strategy, as it promotes learning from peers and working towards shared objectives.

Additionally, to foster the development of soft skills, respondents recommended that educational institutions establish organizations, conduct contests, and organize workshops to promote connections between students and teachers. They also suggested involving students in drama, cultural exchanges, and events. Respondents highlighted cultural exchanges, theatre involvement, and the organization of cultural events as other strategies for developing soft skills. Boosting students' self-confidence and enhancing their soft skills could also be achieved by providing additional hours or backup classes to address their weaknesses. Other useful strategies suggested by respondents included portfolio-writing, scholarships, school trips, tutoring, and blended learning. The results of these strategies are presented in Figure 2.

P1: "Teachers can create clubs like debate club in order to develop communication and self confidence and leadership skills"

P2: "Starting from volunteering in neighbourhood doing gardening and help keep the plants keep watering and keep the cleanliness of the street."

P1: "Then the second one is pair work; I think we have different pairs every week. It would make them develop the sense of adapting with different peoples and it would also train them on how to solve problems with other people who are not the same as you."

P1: "Secondly, for example if we use blended learning makes it clear in meeting the requirements of all students as there are students who prefer to follow classes virtually and others face to face. So blended learning can be at the disposal of both categories."

Responsibility of Soft Skill Development

When asked about who should take responsibility for developing soft skills, students had varying opinions. The majority believed that students themselves are the primary resource for developing these skills, while many also acknowledged the role of university professors in fostering them. Others argued that soft skills are initially learned within the family unit, and then further developed through societal interactions and schooling, starting from primary education. While some students felt that teachers may not be qualified to teach these skills, they suggested that personal coaches or mentors could help students navigate challenging situations, build confidence, and overcome stage fright. See figure 3 for a breakdown of the results.

P2: " I guess you are the only one who is responsible for soft skill development because you are the only who knows what motivates you are you are the only one who knows yourself more than anyone else more than you parents or your friends or teachers. You know how much you can give and what motivates you. So I think no one should be involved to improve soft skills but you."

P5: "In my opinion, I think that the educational system is responsible for developing soft skills because if students were taught in the first grade soft skills we wouldn't face soft skills problems. So if we were taught in the first place to be brave in fact we would see many hidden genius people."

P3: "teachers help you a lot. If you find difficult despite all of this, then you have to do something about."

P4: "Even at university we can develop our soft skills also maybe hiring coaches would help too."
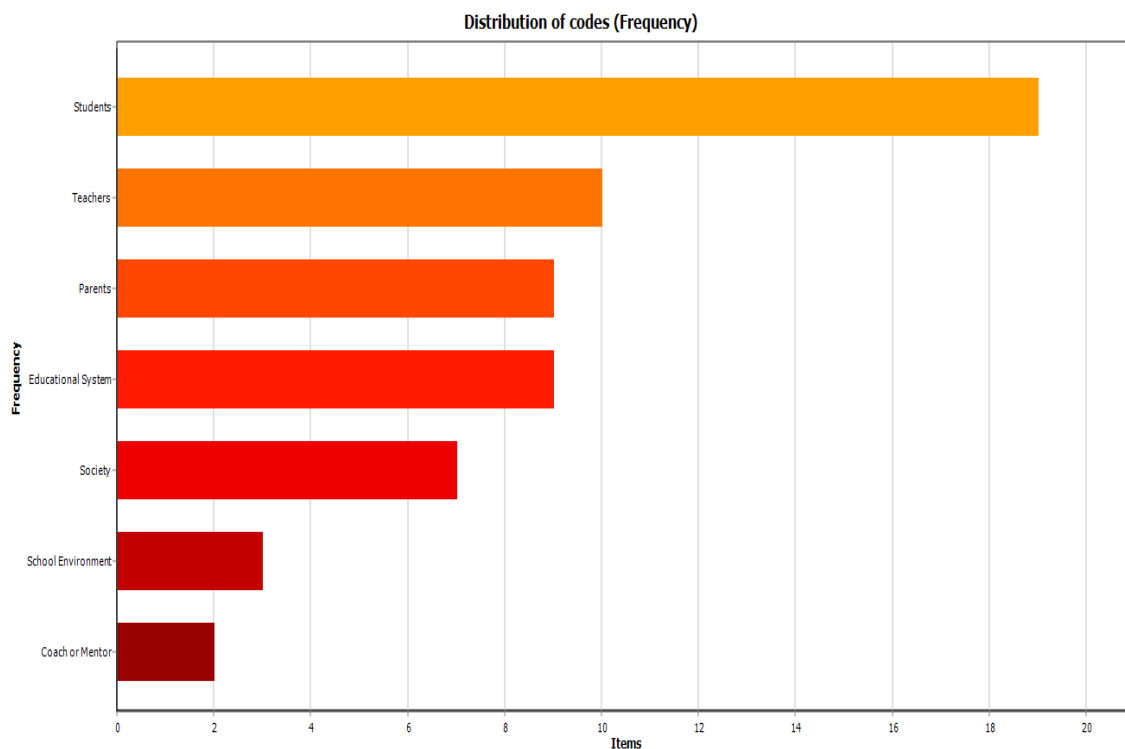
Figure 3. Responsibility of Soft Skill Development

Integration of Soft Skills in EFL Education

All the respondents in this study acknowledged the importance of incorporating soft skills into the EFL curriculum. However, when asked about the optimal strategy for achieving this, i.e., "extracurricular, stand-alone, or embedded models," respondents had varying opinions. Not surprisingly, the majority of students supported the usage of extracurricular activities to enhance soft skills since it allows them to

apply what they have learned as theory in the classroom. The second most preferred integration model, backed by the majority of respondents, was the Stand Alone model, which entails including soft skills into the formal curriculum similar to other formal courses. By teaching soft skills separately and in detail, students are assured that this model may ensure future improvement of these skills. Eight respondents chose the Embedded model, arguing that soft and hard skills should be taught concurrently, as teaching each separately would confuse students and divert their concentration from hard skills. The results of the study are presented in Figure 4.

P4: "and through the use of extracurricular activities. We need to practise soft skills here at the university and outside the university we learn how solve problems."

P2: "I think soft skills should be taught as standalone classes because it is better to get deeper and to understand more those soft skills."

P1: "I think it should be embedded in our classes because every class for example should include communication and not be taught as a separate subject."
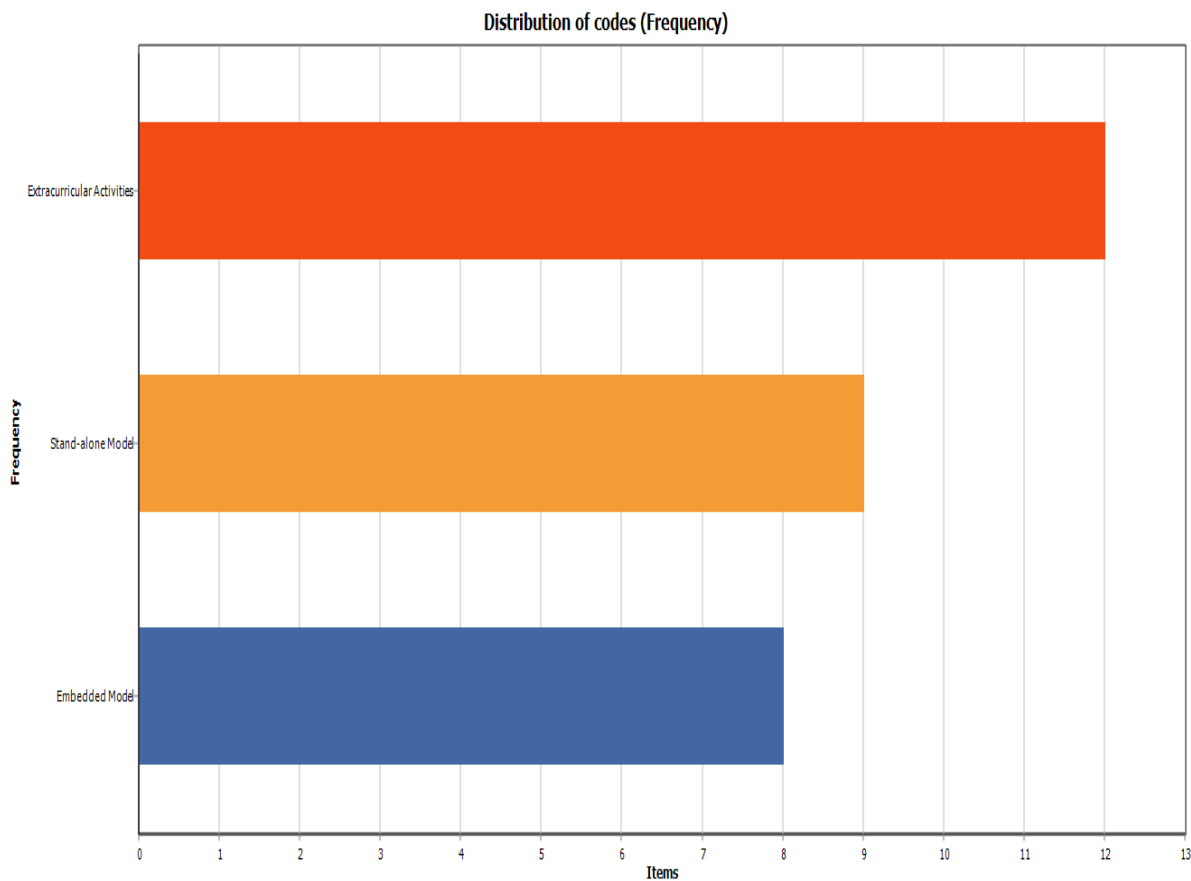
Figure 4. Integrating Soft Skills in EFL classes

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The objective of this descriptive case study was to identify the key soft skills in EFL classes and the most effective strategies to develop them. The study also examined students' perceptions of those responsible for fostering soft skills, and focused on the most significant integration models of these skills in higher education EFL courses. Notably, previous research conducted in the Moroccan context did not specifically address the development of soft skills in EFL settings, making this study a valuable contribution to the field.

According to the overwhelming majority of respondents, communication was identified as the most critical soft skill in EFL classes. Proficient communication in English with classmates, instructors, and colleagues is essential for success in both academic and professional contexts. The second most vital soft skill was problem-solving, as students face a multitude of complex issues that require effective problem-solving skills. In addition, managing time and submitting assignments on schedule are common challenges that students encounter, making time management an essential soft skill in both the classroom and the workplace. Respondents also highlighted teamwork as a crucial soft skill, emphasizing the importance of collaborative work and negotiating solutions in order to complete tasks and meet deadlines.

In response to inquiries about the most effective strategies for developing soft skills in EFL classes, nearly all participants identified discussion and debate as the most essential approach. Through participating in class discussions and engaging in teacher-led debates on various topics, students are able to refine their communication skills. Additionally, voluntary work and community service offer students opportunities to mature, assist others, and further develop their soft skills in an ever-changing world. Given the ubiquity of technology in contemporary life, incorporating virtual platforms and engaging in online exchanges of ideas, cultures, and perspectives was another crucial method for enhancing soft skills, as highlighted by numerous respondents. Furthermore, a significant number of participants emphasized the importance of giving presentations, despite the potential anxiety associated with presenting in front of a large audience, as it can bolster self-confidence and foster the development of soft skills.

When asked about the responsibility for developing soft skills, students identified themselves as the primary responsible party, while teachers were ranked second due to their role in designing lesson plans and incorporating soft skills into the curriculum. Parents were seen as the third group responsible for fostering soft skills, as they are the first individuals with whom we interact and have an important role to play in this regard. With regard to the integration of soft skills, students were presented with three options: standalone, embedded, and extracurricular activities. The majority of respondents favored extracurricular activities as they provide opportunities for practical application of soft skills, complementing the theoretical instruction provided in the classroom.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous research, including Tevdovska's (2015) recommendations for incorporating soft skills into college courses, particularly in the EFL context. Tevdovska highlighted the value of group activities involving discussions and debates for fostering interpersonal and communication skills. Another effective approach is to provide opportunities for students to give oral and poster presentations on topics related to their professional interests, which can be evaluated to provide valuable feedback. Additionally, role plays and debates can be valuable tools for enhancing soft skills.

Andrievskikh and Lapina (2021) utilized a descriptive method to study and recommend strategies for incorporating soft skill development into university English language classes. One recommended approach is to engage students in debates, which provides opportunities to practice communication, active listening, and presentation skills. The collaborative nature of debates also promotes teamwork and cooperation, as students take turns presenting and explaining their arguments. In addition, to equip students with collaborative skills, project work is introduced early on and is supported by step-by-step guidance, practical advice, and ongoing instruction.

Moustadraf's (2021) study examined Moroccan undergraduate engineering students' perception of the value of soft skills. Data were collected through a questionnaire from 255 students across four universities. The study found that active teaching methods, as opposed to traditional methods, were more effective in developing graduates' soft skills. Group work, internships, problem-solving approaches, role-playing, case studies, flipped classrooms, lectures, and project-based learning were the most important strategies for soft skills development, according to the students.

Azmi (2018) conducted a study on the impact of an English language environment provided by ICT on intercultural interactions and soft skills development among Moroccan students. In focus group interviews, students evaluated the effects of ICT-enhanced instructional materials and content on intercultural exchanges and personal development. The majority of respondents agreed that ICT enables students to engage in interactive discussions on global issues and promotes the dissemination and sharing of global values in the EFL classroom. Additionally, students believed that incorporating online web content and applications such as videos, podcasts, blogs, and photos enhanced the effectiveness of class delivery.

Based on the findings discussed above, several recommendations can be proposed for English department professors at the Ben Msik faculty of letters and humanities and other departments inside and outside Morocco. Firstly, it is crucial for teachers to prioritize the development of soft skills in EFL and other classes, and to incorporate various strategies into their lesson plans to assist students in honing these skills. Additionally, the results can inform curriculum designers in developing a soft skills curriculum that aligns with the preferences of students in this department. However, it is important to note that this research has some limitations. Future studies could adopt a collective case study design and involve students from multiple universities in the Casablanca-Settat region. Another interesting area for investigation is teachers' perceptions of the most effective soft skill development methodologies.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest
The authors acted in accordance with the ethical rules in the research. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE CYNICISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEPRESSION IN THE SCHOOL DIMENSION

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the relationship between organizational depression and organizational change cynicism. It also aims to examine how much the teachers' perceived organizational depression level explains the perceived organizational change cynicism. The fact that the relationship between organizational depression and organizational change cynicism, which is shown as the cause or result of each other in the literature, has not been sufficiently examined so far, increases the importance of this research. A relational screening model uses in the research. The sample of the study consists of a total of 329 teachers, 214 female (65%) and 115 male (35%) working in 28 secondary schools in Balıkesir Körfez (Edremit, Havran, Burhaniye, Gömeç, and Ayvalık) districts in the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample was selected by simple random sampling. It constitutes 81.58% of the participant group between the ages of 30-49. The collected data were processed into the SPSS 26.0 program and analyzed. As a result of the research, significant and strong positive relationship was found between organizational depression and organizational change cynicism. Another significant aspect of the study is the findings of the number of teachers in schools regarding the perceptions of organizational depression and organizational change cynicism.

Keywords: Organizational depression, cynicism, cynicism of change, hopelessness, burnout.

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is in intense and rapid change due to globalization, digitalization, and technological developments. There is an age in which an event that has a last-minute value in the morning loses its news value before evening. A quality that was sought after a few years ago can turn into a feature that is not needed today. Moreover, this change process has not only been limited to the qualities of products such as goods, products, and materials but has also affected the quality of the service sector and human resources in organizations. Since 2000, the rapid change in information and communication technologies in the last 20 years continues to affect the way the sectors do business and human life (Yavuzarslan & Kurt, 2020). Occupations that cannot renew themselves, and cannot keep their raw materials, workforce, design, customers, and technology up-to-date are disappearing over time (Çolakoğlu, 2018, p. 47). It is very difficult to predict which professions will come to the fore in the next 10 years, as well as the qualifications sought in these professions. For this reason, the knowledge and skills that the human resources should acquire after entering the organization and their entry qualifications should be compatible with the changing conditions and should not constitute an obstacle to change. Training the personnel in a way that they can follow the change and see the future is significant for the continuity of the organization (Paşaoğlu, 2013). The phenomenon of change has become a characteristic feature in many organizations as well as in our lives today (Lewis, 2019).

With increasing globalization, competition, and market volatility, today's organizations must be more proactive and agile than organizations of the past; Organizations need to adapt quickly to changes in their environment in order not to face any devastating consequences such as company bankruptcy or extinction (Hay et al., 2021).

Organizations sensitivity to change, quick reaction, and appropriate reaction to time and situation have gained more importance today. Organizations that are managed with an ongoing understanding and approach and a status quo understanding cannot show progress and development. Especially in the last pandemic period, this situation has come to light once again. While the organizations and sectors that fit the conditions of the day continue to live and grow, the organizations that continue their traditions have had difficulty adapting to the changing conditions and lag behind the sector. Organizations are structures that affect and are affected by their environment, and if they cannot adapt to the developing order of the world, they take on a static structure. Education is one of the sectors that are most affected by these changes, especially in communication and information technologies, and which is expected to go ahead of the era.

Schools can react to the current rate of change with the interventions to be made. However, these interventions may not always yield positive results. Although there are different reasons for the failure of change interventions in schools, the human factor and the resistance associated with this factor are the most common reasons for the failure of change interventions (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021). How to manage the change process in educational organizations and teachers' attitudes toward change are among the issues that have been emphasized by researchers in recent years. The effective realization of a change in the organization is related to the attitudes and perceptions of the employees as well as the characteristics of the leader (Çalık & Er, 2014). From the point of view of the person being studied, the first and most important thing that a person needs to change is his attitude towards the factors that affect him in his working life (Koçel, 2013: 682). An important issue that hinders the realization of change in the organization is the organizational change cynicism that can develop in the working personnel.

Organizational cynicism is defined as a negative attitude towards new change efforts due to unsuccessful change experiences in the past, and the belief and pessimism that develops in employees that organizational changes will not be successful due to the perception of the inadequacies of the people who manage the change (Wanous et al. 1994). Setting realistic expectations, fulfilling responsibilities, and directing aspirations are three ways an organization can prevent cynicism (Mirvis & Kanter, 1989). Involving the employees in the change process makes them aware of the actions of the management; In addition, accepting past unsuccessful management mistakes, if any, reduces the tendency of employees to blame the manager (Wanous et al., 2000). Information sharing and participation in the decision-making process will prevent organizational change cynicism (Brown & Cregan, 2008). It is necessary to manage the support and justice perceptions of the employees well and to ensure that the employees are aware of the change as much as possible (Thundiyil et al., 2015). Unless there is a clear climate in the organization, change and development efforts will be difficult (Appelbaum, 1977). Making as few changes as possible, informing the employees, and increasing the change capacity will increase the effectiveness of the change in the organization (Stensaker et al., 2002). Recognizing why change is important and celebrating small victories along the way is very important (Stobierski, 2020). Cynicism is likely to occur when successes are not communicated to employees and they assume that they are unsuccessful (Wanous et al. 1994). Cynicism causes a general distrust of the administration and disregard for its instructions (Mirvis & Kanter, 1989). Employees who develop change cynicism show low commitment, satisfaction, and motivation to work in the organization (Reichers et al., 1997).

A teacher experiencing organizational cynicism; may feel that their efforts to improve their school are ignored by other employees. The teacher may feel that his suggestions to improve the quality of his school are not taken into account, and he may cut off his suggestions to improve his school. They may believe that their colleagues are not doing their best. By assuming that there will be no fair

administration, he may think that undeserving people and behaviors will be appreciated. He may have a pessimistic attitude toward the future of the school (Kalağan & Güzeller, 2010).

Studies have listed the negative effects of cynicism as emotional burnout and burnout, absenteeism, insecurity, decreased job satisfaction, and lower commitment (Sguera et al., 2022). While some claim that cynicism is the first stage of burnout, followed by inadequacy and finally exhaustion, there are also studies stating that exhaustion will occur first, this will cause the development of cynicism and then inadequacy will emerge. In general, however, research on burnout has established a sequential link from burnout to cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001). Beginning with feelings of disappointment, burnout ranges from mild frustration, anxiety, and depression to more severe emotional responses, often described as emotional exhaustion or depletion of emotional resources. The feeling of depersonalization, which is defined as the development of negative and cynical attitudes toward service recipients, is also a symptom. (Lewandowski, 2003). In addition, cynicism and emotional exhaustion meet at a common denominator in terms of their effects on depression (Capone et al., 2019).

Having difficulty keeping up with the developing technology and the rapidly advancing time; Individuals who are insufficient to provide solutions to daily stresses and troubles are at risk of developing depression (Karadağ, 2019). Depression; Symptoms such as hopelessness, pessimism, inadequacy, self-confidence, helplessness, feelings of worthlessness, guilt or self-blame for unimportant reasons, withdrawal from social life, and no longer enjoying things that are normally enjoyed; It is a state of depression that is considered as a mood disorder in psychology if it lasts for a long time and has a significant negative impact on the social, individual or professional life of the person (Budak, 2009: 196). Depression can severely affect a person's ability to perform routine activities at work. U.S. companies lose an estimated $30 to $44 billion a year due to employee depression, whose ratio varies by occupation and industry, negatively impacting the U.S. industry due to loss of productivity, employee absenteeism, and low morale (Sutton, 2012:174). The depressive mood of the teachers working in the schools may prevent the investments made and the realization of the goals of the school. This situation may cause students not to gain the skills they need to acquire in various aspects (Akman & Abaslı, 2016). Depression is one of the most common and costly health problems affecting the workforce. Despite well-established research showing the relationship between employee depression and decreased productivity at work, increased absenteeism, and higher healthcare use, most employers remain largely unresponsive to the phenomenon of company-based depression (Putnam & McKibbin, 2004). However, contrary to what is commonly known, depression can turn into a situation that can spread not only in the individual dimension but also in the organization. Seymour Epstein, professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, says that people are affected by the moods of those around them through "emotional contagion" (Bird & Clendenin, 1992).

Organizational depression, which tends to spread from the leaders in the organization to the employees, is defined as the beginning of lifelessness and fatigue in the organization, the indifference, and lethargy, the absence of any meaningful action, the inability to see the future, the avoidance of risks and initiatives. (Bilchik, 2000). The low performance or ineffective behavior of employees, collectively or individually, distinguishes such organizations from others (Gray, 2008). Organizational depression can cause a decrease in trust in the organization, a deterioration in communication, a decrease in motivation in employees, and an increase in absenteeism (Kilpatrick, 1998). Organizational depression may occur due to the decrease in employees' commitment to the organization, the negative atmosphere of the organization, and a closed culture against change (Atasoy, 2018). Organizational depression can develop in cases of downsizing (Gray, 2008), loss of employee motivation and decrease in organizational potential (Avetyan, 2006), ambiguous and closed communication in the organization (Betof & Betof, 2010), inconsistencies in the process (Brunsson, 1986), and failure as a result of unattainable expectations (Appelbaum, 1977). In such a situation, policy and organizational values should be expressed more clearly and it should be accepted that the

mental health of the employees is an important condition (Gray, 2008). Focusing on success instead of emphasising failures and making use of employees in line with their strengths are important for the healthy functioning of the organisation. (DeTienne et al., 2020). Effective leaders know how to manage group influence by understanding the collective response of the group (Barsade & Gibson, 2012). Focusing on a different place, carrying out studies that will make the organization feel good, and giving victory to the organization can help the organization gain confidence and get away from depression (Cohen & Cohen, 1993).

Depression, on which there is little research on Human Resource Management; while increasing the cost in the organization, minimizes the overall performance of the organization (Khan & Sultan, 2020). While it is widely accepted that some degree of failure is common and ultimately inevitable in organizations, critical scientific interest; continues to focus on common questions and themes about managing and surviving failure, particularly in the context of organizational change, or questioning the consequences of failure (Schwarz et al., 2021). The interaction of employees' cognitive processes and emotional evaluations during organizational change has received great attention in recent years (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016). Rahi et al. (2021) state that for the successful implementation of change, it is important to first examine the attitude of the employee about being ready for change, and this significantly affects the implementation of the change. General findings (Moosa et al., 2021) show the growing interest of researchers around the world in the subject of change management, and one of the most repeated keywords in change management is organizational change. Although organizational change is one of the most researched topics in the fields of organizational and educational sciences, discussions continue conceptualizing and implementing change in organizations, since most of the organizational change initiatives fail and each failure brings financial and psychological costs to the organization (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021:801).

Purpose of the research
This study aims to try to prove the relationship between "organizational depression" and "organizational change cynicism" and to determine to what extent these two phenomena predict each other. The belief in change or resistance to change in schools where the visibility and implementation of education policies are ensured is extremely important. This research, which aims to examine the relationship between organizational depression and organizational change cynicism under the school structure, from the perspective of teachers working in schools, aims to develop suggestions for practitioners and researchers in the light of the information it has obtained. The fact that the relationship between organizational change cynicism and organizational depression has not been sufficiently emphasized until now increases the importance of the research.

Problem Status
1) Is there significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of organizational depression and organizational change cynicism?

2) Do teachers perceptions of organizational depression predict their organizational change cynicism?

METHOD

Under this heading, there are research models, participants, data collection tools, and data analysis.

Research Model
The relational screening model is used in studies conducted to determine the existence and/or degree of change in two or more variables. Although the relationship found cannot be considered a real cause-effect relationship, it can provide some clues in that direction and enable the estimation of the other by learning the situation in one variable. Because the scanning model is economical, practical, and ethical compared to the trial model, the relationships found with scanning can be interpreted accordingly. In the comparative scanning model, since the researcher can find the opportunity to work in a natural environment, the results obtained are more likely to be suitable for real life (Karasar, 2020). This

study, it is aimed to determine the relationship between organizational change cynicism level and organizational depression level in terms of teachers' perceptions with the relational screening model.

Universe and Sample

In the formal education system of the Ministry of National Education, secondary schools constitute an important stage in the placement of students in secondary education institutions of various types and qualities. It is the first stage where the academic success and statistics of students and schools can be determined by the central exam. Moreover; Secondary school students or students who have just finished secondary school participate in exams such as PISA and TIMSS, in which international rankings and comparisons are made. Due to the mentioned importance of the secondary school level, the schools included in the research were limited to the secondary school level and focused on secondary schools. The group of the research consists of a total of 329 teachers, 214 female (65%) and 115 male (35%) working in public secondary schools in Balıkesir Körfez (Edremit, Havran, Burhaniye, Gömeç, and Ayvalık) districts in the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample was selected by simple random sampling. 329 teachers working in 28 secondary schools from 5 different districts, which differ in terms of the average central exam scores, service areas, and teacher numbers, participated in the research. The number of teachers working in official secondary schools in the Körfez districts of Balıkesir province is 1,126, and 329 participants in the sample correspond to a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of 4.55. (https://surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm) It constitutes 81.58% of the participant group between the ages of 30-49.

Data Collection and Analysis

Organizational Depression Scale: The "Organizational Depression Scale" developed by Sezer (2011) was used to determine the organizational depression level of teachers. Consisting of 42 items and one dimension, the scale is Likert type and is scored between 1 and 5. In the scale in which negative statements are scored in reverse, the most positive answer has the highest score. The range of points that can be taken from the scale is 42-210. A high score on the scale indicates a low level of organizational depression (Sezer, 2011). The Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient of the organizational depression scale was .941 (Sezer, 2011), and the Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient recalculated in this study was .965. The KMO value of the organizational depression scale was found to be .961, thus sufficient sampling was achieved, and the Sig. (.000) value was found to be significant and was found suitable for factor analysis. The organizational depression scale is grouped under a single factor, and the factor load values of the items vary between .301 and .816 (Sezer, 2011). In our study, the recalculated values vary between .347 and .825. In the Organizational Depression Scale collected in a single factor, the variance explained by the factor alone was 38.384% (Sezer, 2011), and the recalculated value in this study was 42.991.

Organizational Change Cynicism Scale: Determining organizational change cynicism level of teachers, Tolay et al. (2017), and the validity and reliability analyses of the "Organizational Change Cynicism Scale" were used. The scale, which consists of 15 items and three dimensions called managerial, experiential, and acquired cynicism, is Likert type and is scored between 1 and 5 (Tolay et al., 2017). Like the organizational depression scale, negative statements were scored in reverse on this scale and the most positive answer was analyzed with the highest score. The range of points that can be taken from the scale is 15-75. A high score on the scale indicates that organizational change cynicism is low. The Cronbach Alpha value for all of the items in the Organizational Change Cynicism Scale was determined as .939 (Tolay et al. 2017). In this study, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha value) calculated for Organizational Change Cynicism, consisting of 15 items, was found to be .939. When the intra-dimensional reliability analysis of the organizational change cynicism scale is examined, the reliability of the managerial change cynicism dimension is .893, the reliability of the experiential change cynicism dimension is .822, and the reliability of the acquisitional change cynicism dimension is .854 (Tolay et al., 2017). In this study, the recalculated reliability coefficient of the three factors in the Organizational Change Cynicism scale was found to be YDS (.938) DDS (.850) EDS (.904), and the reliability of the dimensions was found to be high. The KMO

value of the organizational change cynicism scale was found to be .930, thus sufficient sampling was achieved, and the Sig. (.000) value was found to be significant and suitable for factor analysis. The Organizational Change Cynicism Scale was used in this study by Tolay et al. (2017) "Managemental change cynicism (YDS)" "Acquisitive change cynicism (EDS)" and "Experiential change cynicism (DDS)" It was determined that they were grouped under three factors. In this study, the percentage explaining the total variance of the three dimensions was determined as 72.21. Tolay et al. (2017) also found this rate to be 64.91% in the study.

In this study, which consists of 57 items in total, the general reliability coefficient of the scale is .973. For the Corrected Item-Total Correlation Organizational Depression Scale, which provides a clearer decision on the contribution of the items in the measurement tool to the reliability and is recommended to exclude items less than .30 from the measurement tool as a general rule (Bursal, 2019, p. 230), It varies between .313 and .777. (Sezer, 2011: 47). In the organizational change cynicism scale, the correlation of all dimensions with the items was between .615 and .873 (Tolay et al., 2017: 108). As a result of the recalculation in this study, the items ranged between .335-.796 in the organizational depression scale and .482-.810 in the organizational change cynicism scale. (r>.30 is sufficient.)

Analysis of data
The collected data were processed into the SPSS 26.0 program and analyzed. The relationships between the two scales used in the study were determined using the Spearman Rank Differences Correlation coefficient. In addition, regression analysis was conducted to determine whether teachers' organizational depression levels predict organizational change cynicism levels.

RESULTS

An answer to the question "Is there a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of organisational depression and organisational change cynicism?" was sought. In the solution of this sub-problem, the correlation between the scores of organisational depression scale (Sezer, 2011) and organisational change cynicism scale (Tolay et al., 2017) was calculated. Although there are different classifications in the literature, it is accepted that there is a weak relationship ($|r| \le .30$) and a strong relationship ($|r| > .70$) (Bursal, 2019, p. 131).

Table 1. The relationship between organisational depression and organisational change cynicism (correlations)

	Organizational Change Cynicism
Organizational Depression	.752(**)

**p<.05

In order to determine the relationship between average depression score and average change cynicism, Spearman Rank Difference Correlation coefficient was preferred since one of the variables did not show normal distribution (Kilmen, 2020, p. 128). The correlation coefficient for the data on organisational depression and organisational change cynicism perceived by teachers is .752 (Table 1) and expresses a strong positive relationship. (Bursal, 2019, p. 131) Since the significance value is p=.000 (Sig<.01), there is a significant relationship between the two variables. Since the coefficient of determination r^2=.57, it can be said that approximately 57% of the variability in organisational depression can be explained by organisational change cynicism or approximately 57% of the variability in organisational change cynicism can be explained by organisational depression, although there is no cause-effect relationship. In other words, the variance explained by organisational depression and organisational change cynicism is 57%. Coefficient of determination (r^2) expresses the variance explained by the variables. (r_S=.752; n=329; p=.000)

Table 2. The relationship between organisational depression and organisational change cynicism sub-factors (correlations)

	Managerial Change Cynicism	**Acquisitional Change Cynicism**	**Experiential Change Cynicism**
Organizational Depression	.679(**)	.452(**)	.760(**)

**p<.05

The relationship between organisational depression and organisational change cynicism sub-factors is shown in Table 2 accordingly, .679 (p<.01) correlation was found between organisational depression and managerial change cynicism, .452 (p<.01) correlation between organisational depression and acquisition change cynicism, .760 (p<.01) correlation between organisational depression and experiential change cynicism.

Table 3. The predictive power of organisational depression variable on organisational change cynicism and its sub-dimensions

Variable	B	Standard Error B	β	t	p	R^2
Still	1.199	.123	-----	9.745	.000	-----
Organizational Change Cynicism	.763	.034	.777	22.288	.000	.603
Still	.804	.179	-----	4.495	.000	-----
Managerial Change Cynicism	.904	.050	.709	18.167	.000	.502
Still	2.120	.190	-----	11.157	.000	-----
Acquisitional Change Cynicism	.542	.053	.493	10.255	.000	.243
Still	.914	.120	-----	7.628	.000	-----
Experiential Change Cynicism	.792	.033	.796	23.773	.000	.633

Organizational Depression: Predictive variable

Organizational Change Cynicism and its sub-dimensions: Predicted variable

As can be understood from Table 3, we can say that the predictor variable "organisational depression" explains 60 percent of the predicted variable "organisational change cynicism". It can be said that a 1-unit change in organisational depression variable will cause a change of .76 in organizational change cynicism. t value is significant and positive (directly proportional). As a result of the regression analysis, it can be said that organisational depression has a high and significant relationship with organisational change cynicism (R=.78 R^2 =.60, p<.01).

Table 4. The Durbin-Watson Value of Predicting Organizational Change Cynicism

	R	R Square	F	p	Durbin-Watson
Örgütsel depresyon	.817^a	.667	217.097	.000*	1.871

*p<.05

Table 5. The predictive power of organisational change cynicism sub-dimensions on organisational depression

Variable	B	Standard Error B	β	t	p	VIF
Still	.539	.133	-----	4.041	.000	-----
Managerial Change Cynicism	.220	.038	.280	5.731	.000	2.332
Acquisitional Change Cynicism	-.051	.038	-.056	-1.324	.186	1.715
Experiential Change Cynicism	.626	.051	.623	12.289	.000	2.511

Organizational Change Cynicism sub-dimensions: Predictive variable

Organizational Depression: Predicted variable

DDS, YDS, and EDS; explain 66% of the change in organizational depression. Since the significance value calculated for the Multicorrelation Coefficient (R=817; p=.000) between the predictive independent variables YDS, EDS, and DDS and the dependent variable organizational depression is p<.01, there is a significant relationship between these variables (Table 4). Since the Durbin-Watson value takes a value between 1-3, it has met the condition of being independent of the errors. (Seçer, 2015: 150) As a result of regression analysis, it was found that managerial change cynicism and experiential change cynicism have a high level and significant relationship with organizational depression (R=.82, R^2=.64, p<.01). YDS and DDS have a positive and significant effect on organizational depression. The change in the 1-unit YDS variable causes a change in the 0.220-unit organizational depression variable. In addition, the change in the 1-unit DDS variable causes a change in the .626-unit organizational depression variable (Table 5). When the standardized (β) coefficient and t values are examined, it can be said that DSS and YDS, respectively, are significant predictors of organizational depression in terms of relative importance (Seçer, 2015). Increasing organizational depression significantly increases organizational change cynicism. In addition, managerial change cynicism and experiential change cynicism predict organizational depression significantly.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

This research aims to determine teachers' organizational depression levels and organizational change cynicism perceptions, the relationship between these two variables, and organizational depression's organizational change.It aims to determine whether it predicts change cynicism. The attitudes of teachers working in educational institutions, which are the pioneers of change, to change and their positive-negative perceptions about the organization are very important for the future of the society they live in as well as the development of the organization they are in.

It is not easy to abandon or change the works and processes from the past, which have become a habit, turned into a routine, do not require any additional effort in practice, and have been mastered. Employees may develop a bias and resist change for a variety of reasons. Resistance to change is an important factor to consider in any change process. Employees who aim to protect the current situation by resisting change and hindering the process at the beginning or in its development may exist in the organization. While avoiding resistance to change is not universal advice, managers need to pay particular attention to certain issues (Pardo del Val & Martínez Fuentes, 2003).

Since it is an important indicator of the employee's intention to leave the organization, the resistance developed against change has led to the development of supportive and regulatory measures that reduce the feeling of stress and burnout by developing welfare policies in business life in this period when organizations are frequently going through a change process by managers who care about stability (Srivastava & Agrawal, 2020) . Resistanceto change can be positive, even necessary, for organizations in small doses because it encourages levels of critical reflection; Another factor in front of change is change fatigue, which can settle in employees, whose benefits have not been found in studies, however, because the behaviors are not rooted, it is easier to eliminate and alleviate. Change fatigue, which is a different phenomenon from resistance to change, has been defined as overwhelming feelings of stress, exhaustion, and burnout fueled by the feelings of indecision and powerlessness associated with rapid and continuous change in the workplace. Change fatigue; It causes personnel to feel powerless and disappointed and increases the rates of sickness and absenteeism in employees. When attempts to change are in vain, a direct response to staff exhaustion is that while silent opposition develops; high organizational change rates increase the risk of personnel experiencing stress, burnout, and/or potential change fatigue (McMillan, 2018).

The first finding of this study is that the level of organizational depression, which is claimed to be related to exhaustion, fatigue, and burnout, is perceived by teachers as below average, and teachers' perceptions of organizational change cynicism are at a low level. With this research, it can be said that teachers working in public schools have developed a low negative attitude towards change, and they also experience low levels of feelings such as hopelessness and exhaustion. It is seen that the negative

attitude towards the change that may develop in the employees due to the intense change initiatives, which is the subject of criticism in various institutions and organizations, has little place in the teachers. The levels of each of the factors such as Administrative Change Cynicism (YDS), Experiential Change Cynicism (DDS), and Acquired Change Cynicism (EDS), which constitute the organizational change cynicism and sub-dimensions of teachers, were found to be "low". In the sub-dimensions of the organizational change cynicism scale, it can be said that experiential change cynicism is experienced more intensely by teachers compared to other dimensions, and therefore, teachers' negative attitudes towards change mostly stem from negative results in the past. This research, it is aimed to determine the expectations of teachers at the end of the change process. It has emerged that the perception that it will not happen and will result in failure and the thoughts that it will bring many problems should be prevented. The implementation of the management's opinion, the avoidance of employees from taking additional responsibilities, bureaucratic reasons, and unsuitable physical conditions are other issues that should be emphasized. It may be beneficial for managers to accept the unsuccessful change attempts in the past, implement practices based on employee expectations, ensure that employees have a sense of trust, and introduce a personnel management system that will prevent employees from being trapped within the limits of their job descriptions.

The second finding of the study is that there is a positive, strong, and statistically significant relationship between organizational depression and organizational change cynicism. (r_s=.752; r^2=.57; n=329; p=.000) We can say that the predictor variable "organizational depression" explains 60 percent of the predicted variable "Organizational change cynicism". (R^2=.603) As a result of simple linear regression analysis, it can be said that organizational depression has a high and significant relationship with organizational change cynicism. (R=.78 R^2=.60, p<.01) It can be said that a 1-unit change in the Organizational Depression variable will cause a .76 change in organizational change cynicism. As a result of multiple linear regression analysis, it was found that managerial change cynicism and experiential change cynicism had a high and significant relationship with organizational depression. (R=.82, R^2=.64, p<.01) YDS and DDS have a positive and significant effect on organizational depression. The change in the 1-unit YDS variable causes a change in the .220-unit organizational depression variable. In addition, the change in the 1-unit DDS variable causes a change in the 0.626-unit organizational depression variable. In terms of relative importance, it can be said that DSS and YDS are significant predictors of organizational depression, respectively. Increasing organizational depression significantly increases organizational change cynicism. In addition, managerial change cynicism and experiential change cynicism predict organizational depression significantly. The highlight of the study is that there is a strong relationship between organizational depression and organizational depression. However, this research has also revealed that organizational depression is a strong predictor of organizational change cynicism. Therefore, managers who want to combat organizational change cynicism should also consider organizational depression; employees may need to take into account feelings of hopelessness, exhaustion, fatigue, and pessimism.

In support of our research, a strong relationship was found between burnout and cynicism (depersonalization), which represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout and expresses a negative, emotionless, and extremely independent response (Maslach et al. 2001). Törnroos et al. (2015) determined that cynicism mediated a significant portion (21.5%) of the effect of workload on depression. In the research called "High workload can increase cynical attitudes and insecure feelings towards others, which can increase depressive mood", it was recommended that cynicism increases the perceived relationship between work tension and depression, and therefore this relationship should be taken into account. Zheng et al. (2022) state that burnout and cynicism partially mediate the effects of work-family conflict on depression, and fully mediate the effects of organizational role conflict on depression. Kiraz and Bakioğlu (2016) Hunter cynicism scale; with depression, anxiety, and stress scales they state that they have low positive and significant correlation values. Wu and Wu (2019) state that the positive or negative emotions that the managers will show in response to the events in the workplace will affect the emotional reactions of the employees, and the positive emotional reactions of the managers will lead the employees to show a high level of commitment to the work and

subsequently affect the innovative behaviors. Abeltina et al. (2021) stated that the most effective predictor of cynicism was depression (38%) in a study they conducted with 394 people who work in various sectors such as education, health, informatics, construction, wholesale-retail and finance in Latvia, with a balanced distribution of private enterprises and state institutions. Rahi et al. (2021), the results of their research revealed that perceived competence, perceived kinship, perceived autonomy, coding strategy, and personalization strategy explained 76.8% of the variance in employee readiness for change. Koutsimani and Montgomery (2021) state that burnout and cynicism are positively related to depression and anxiety. Kachel et al. (2020) state that high cynicism is associated with low optimism. The change itself can cause a reaction such as depression as well as reactions such as denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance that follow the grief model (Gibbons, 2015). Setting hard-to-reach goals in change initiatives can put the organization in danger. Unrealistic expectations and eventual failure; causes a shattered ego and ideal, low self-image, self-directed aggression, guilt, and ultimately depression (Appelbaum, 2020). As organizational depression increases in teachers, professional burnout increases, and as organizational depression decreases, professional burnout decreases (Sagir, 2015).

The last finding of our study is the findings of the teacher presence in schools regarding the perception of organizational depression and change cynicism. With this research, it can be said that organizational depression and organizational change cynicism may develop more in schools with 20 or more teachers than in schools with less than 20 teachers. The fact that the level of organizational trust, which is an important factor in reducing change cynicism (Mirvis & Kanter, 1989, p. 380; Sguera et al., 2022, p. 96) and preventing organizational depression (Kilpatrick, 1998; Cohen & Cohen, 1993, p. 42), is higher in schools where the number of teachers is between 11-20 (Yılmaz, 2006) is a finding that supports our research. In addition, there are various studies stating that the increase in the number of teachers reduces the level of trust in colleagues (Ekinci, 2018; Özer et al., 2006) and organizational trust (Memduhoğlu & Zengin, 2011; Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz, 2008). Teachers working in schools with a low number of teachers have a higher perception of school culture than teachers in schools with a large number of teachers (Berk, 2020). The communication skills of administrators who have more teachers in their schools are perceived more negatively by teachers (Çaybaş, 2021; Güngör, 2022). The high number of teachers in the school will reduce the possibility of teachers interacting with each other or with the administrators. As the number of teachers increases, the probability of distorting the information transferred from one person to another will increase, and the interpersonal effect based on cohesion will decrease (Bidwell et al., 1997). As the number of teachers in a school increases, it is more difficult for teachers to get to know and interact with other teachers, and therefore the sense of connection and cooperation opportunities with these other teachers decreases (Weathers, 2011). As the number of teachers working in the school increases, it is seen that school administrators meet the needs of teachers less within the framework of self-determination theory (Kahraman et al., 2021). As the number of teachers exceeds 10, it becomes less possible for staff to be equally involved in the decision-making process (Wallace & Huckman, 1996). It can be said that in schools with a low number of teachers, principals expect higher performance from teachers (Ağaoğlu & Kara, 2021). As the number of teachers increases, the performance of teacher communities decreases (Sun et al., 2020), and their contributions and initiatives decrease (Li, 2017). Therefore, in the fight against organizational depression and organizational change cynicism in organizations, especially in schools, the consideration of the number of employees, especially by the decision makers and planners, who are above the management level, can contribute to the organization.

Recommendations for Researchers and Practitioners
For researchers; Developing a scale measuring the level of organizational depression, conducting qualitative research on perceptions of organizational depression, and researching private school employees can be suggested suggestions. For practitioners; introducing a system of additional remuneration and rewarding based on performance, concrete data and evidence, avoiding behaviors that will damage the feelings of trust and justice in the organization, knowing the knowledge, skills and abilities of the employees before the changes to be made in the organization, taking their opinions,

informing them throughout the process and relieving them of their concerns, Instead of in-service trainings that can be seen as drudgery, it can be suggested to focus on in-school and out-of-school social activities that appeal to the emotions and spirits of individuals, to avoid high expectations or workloads above their capacities that may stress employees, and to stay away from change practices that may cause frustration in teachers.

Limitations of the Research

Although this study revealed several important findings regarding organizational depression and organizational change cynicism, there are some limitations. First of all, this research is limited to the variables measured by the "Organizational Change Cynicism Scale" and the "Organizational Depression Scale". In-depth analysis can be carried out with qualitative research. A second limitation is that this research is limited to teachers working in public secondary schools in the Körfez districts of Balıkesir province (Edremit, Havran, Burhaniye, Gömeç, and Ayvalık). The teachers who participated in the research sincerely answered all questions; reflect their feelings and thoughts; they respond with sincerity; It is assumed that randomly selected schools and teacher sampling represent the universe.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This study was carried out by the recommendations of the Çanakkale 18 Mart University Ethics Committee, with written informed consent from all subjects. The findings reported in this article represent part of the first author's dissertation under the supervision of the second author. İra, in the planning of the study; Afacan played an important role in the conduct of the study. Data analysis Afacan; Ira prepared the draft of the article. Ira critically reviewed the article for important intellectual content.

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THE ROLE OF PEERS IN THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract

One of the most widespread challenges in education in recent years is the role of peers in the inclusion of students with special needs, in order to achieve socialization and academic achievements. With a descriptive character, this research has collected quantitative and qualitative data, the quantitative data were collected through the questionnaire instrument carried out with 128 students of the eighth and ninth grades of those classes where there were students with special educational needs. For the collection of these data, we stopped at the Inclusion Index manual by the authors Tony Both and Mel Aincow, adapted and adapted in the Albanian language Zabeli and Behluli (2014) and a semi-structured interview was conducted with 5 support teachers and 5 assistants of students with special educational needs. The research was carried out in Kosovo, in four primary schools in the city of Gjilan. These schools were randomly selected, while the classes were purposively selected. The results show that peers positively affect the socialization of students with special needs as well as educational development. The results show that girls have more positive attitudes than boys towards peers with special educational needs.

Keywords: Peers, education, attitudes, inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

Students with special educational needs are students who need additional support or changes in learning methods to achieve success in school. Peers play an important role in inclusive education for these students.

Peers can help encourage students with special educational needs by offering them support and befriending them. Peers can also help develop the social competences of students with special educational needs by encouraging them to participate in different activities and helping them build relationships with other students. Inclusive education is a learning environment that provides access, accommodation and support for all students. Educational institutions must be adapted for all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream learning environments has become a common practice around the world (Meijer, Jan Pijl, & Hegarty, 1994).

The educational system has the potential to provide quality education to all individuals and rise above the stigma that still exists in society. Conversely, the education system can perpetuate inequalities related to gender, ethnicity, class or disability (Beckett, 2009). Proponents of special education see specialized institutions as the best alternative for educating children with special needs, while other studies prove that children who attend specialized institutions are at high risk of being socially isolated (UNICEF, 2014). The factors that contribute to the successful inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools are many, but the purpose of this study is to investigate how the cultural factor in this case, the behavior of peers, influences inclusion, and how the latter can become a source of encouragement and not an obstacle for the realization of comprehensive processes.

Based on many studies, we have oriented our research with a special focus on the role of support teachers and assistants who work with students with atypical development. Their role within the school is considered a key factor in the correlation through teachers, parents and other actors within the school. All children have their own individual characteristics and needs (Gjelaj-Zhitija, 2014). The Individual Education Plan is an instrument that helps teachers in schools to understand the needs of children, at the same time to plan suitable activities to achieve the goals, which are not all academic but can also be from everyday life. The role of the support teacher is best reflected in the MEST document - "Inclusive education - Everyone's right", where it is stated that the support teacher in cooperation with the class teacher or class guardian identifies special needs and organizes, plans joint activities according to to the individual needs of the student and in cases where it is necessary to do individual work, compiles the individual education plan together with the teacher or class guardian, the parent, the school director and also helps to raise the awareness of the school staff about the process of all inclusion (MASHT, 2010).

According to the Education for All World Monitoring Report (UNESKO, 2015), it is underlined that the lack of opportunity for education and the deficits in the learning process, "defeat" education to fulfill its function as an agent of equality. Inadequate academic performance, poor relationships with peers and teachers, play a major role in explaining low levels of school involvement and overall school satisfaction (Bossaert, 2015). This finding is also reinforced as a result of professional activity as support teachers in schools, recognizing the importance of education in the personal, cognitive and psycho-social formation of an individual.

But what happens to Children with special needs who stay isolated at home and don't even have the opportunity to learn the word "school"? And in cases where children are integrated into the education system, how much do they benefit, do they develop their potential? What about children who attend school and are constantly exposed to the discriminatory behavior of their peers? What about those who drop out of school after class IX? All these questions are for us to answer as a society because we can directly influence overcoming these challenges and address these concerns to the developers of comprehensive policies in education (Syla, 2002).

This study is important because it will critically examine the national education strategy and will propose the interventions that should be made in the practices of inclusive education in lower education institutions and will serve as reference material for many researchers who in-depth studies in the field of comprehensive education will continue.

The role of peers in the social and educational development of students with special needs
A large number of authors have given their opinions regarding the influence that peers have on the socialization and education of students with special needs. During the review of the literature for the realization of this study, the various findings led to the conclusions that "Children who learn together, learn to live together, socialize, respect and accept each other".

From what was elaborated above, we can say that the socialization and education of students with special educational needs begins at school with peer influence.

Regarding the theoretical aspect and the literature written about the role of peers in socialization and academic development, it is worth emphasizing the research by (Manset & Semmel, 1997), in which case it is said that comprehensive education for children with special needs brings improvement in terms of academics, but also gives children opportunities to socialize with their peers.

Research related to the ongoing inclusion of students with special needs has a positive impact on children's lives both in terms of socialization and their education (Rafftery, Piscitelli, & Boettcher, 2003).

The process of socialization and education lasts throughout life, starting from childhood and thus continuing into adulthood, when they become more rigid in behavior and attitudes. Children with special

needs must be accepted by their peers as they are without differences, so that only then they have more opportunities to interact with their typically developing peers.

Many great pedagogues and psychologists have written and discussed the issue of socialization of students with special needs. Social learning theory asserts that people serve as models of human behavior and some people are able to bring about behavioral changes in different individuals based on the individuals' value and interpretation system (Bandura, 1986).

Then Lev Vygotsky's theory of social development has had a positive impact on the field of education, as it does not focus on the isolated individual, but on the relationship of the individual in his social and cultural context. Lev Vygotsky adheres to the idea that the culture in which the learner is a part and exchanges with others are of primary importance.

Thus, learning at school plays a key role in the construction of the individual, and exchange with others is an essential factor in this construction.

The gap between students' ability to complete a task under the guidance of adults or in collaboration with peers and their ability to solve problems independently.

So the zone of proximal development includes functions that are still in the embryonic stage and can be considered as "loops" of development and not its fruit, that part of development that is in the process of formation (Payne, 2005).

Vygotsky's theory promotes a learning context where students play an active role, where teachers collaborate with students making the learning process a mutual and enjoyable experience. This helps us to know the dynamics and his future development, what today the disabled child does with help, in the future he will be able to do independently.

Proponents of special education see specialized institutions as the best alternative for educating children with special educational needs, while other studies prove that children who attend specialized institutions are at high risk of being socially isolated (UNICEF, 2014).

Inclusive education is a matter of social justice as it creates a society that values everyone equally. It is a state obligation to support children with special needs to develop their potential and to facilitate full and equal participation in education.

The development of inclusiveness in the school system in Kosovo - the challenges
During the 20th century, under the influence of the medical model of disability, the educational system was specialized and separated as an expression of care for children with disabilities, in order to better respond to their special educational needs (Meijer, Jan Pijl, & Hegarty, 1994). For researchers like Armstrong (2003), this was a wrong step, since isolation from others is the response that is usually given, under the guise of caring, to people who are considered worthless, a burden, "not like us". or as needy to be taken under protection.

Inclusive education means the inclusion of all children in ordinary schools, where they are offered education according to their needs. Comprehensive education is a process that started in the 80s and is progressing at a fast pace, while in our country it started in the last decade. This system managed to replace the traditional education that represented a binary system, divided into two components: in ordinary education and in special education.

Children with special needs do not all have learning difficulties, but, as a rule, they are educated in special schools according to the type of impairment.

Inclusive education is not just a partial adjustment of the education system, but its complete renewal and deep school reform (Stangvik, 1997). The implementation of the comprehensive education reform

creates the conditions for an education system that includes within itself a variety of students and that differentiates education according to this variety.

In recent years, the changes that have taken place in Kosovo had a strong impact in the field of education as well. The reform of education, along with many innovations, has also brought new notions and concepts in the treatment and the place that comprehensive education should have within the educational system.

Very positive progress has been made in the direction of inclusion, the basis of which is found in special education. Special education in Kosovo has been operating since 1950, when special schools began to operate.

It is about a greater percentage of the inclusion of children with special needs in education and the advancement of the legal infrastructure.

At the beginning of this period, some international organizations start to support, among others, the special education sector. Here it is worth mentioning: Save the Children, Finnish Support to the Development of the Special Education Sector in Kosovo (known as: FSDEK – Finnish Support to the Development of Education in Kosovo), UNICEF, Handikos, etc. The period after 2000 marks progress towards the development of a series of documents by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Zabeli, 2010).

In Kosovo, the education of children with special needs began to be organized in pre-school institutions, special schools, resource centers, regular classes, attached classes, which function within the framework of regular schools in which supporting educators, assistants/ and for children with special needs, supporting teachers, as well as operationalized municipal support teams for assessment (MASHT, 2010). From what was elaborated above, we can say that the responsible institutions in Kosovo offer support to families who have children with special needs at school.

In order for all these reforms to be adapted in practice, it is necessary to accept the changes by all the actors of this process and in particular by the teachers and their peers as an important part of these changes (Reçica, 2016).

The process of socialization and education lasts throughout life, starting from childhood and thus continuing into adulthood, when they become more rigid in behavior and attitudes. Children with special needs must be accepted by their peers as they are without differences, so that only then they have more opportunities to interact with their typically developing peers.

METHOD

The participants in this study were (N=128) students from four elementary schools in the Municipality of Gjilan of the VIIIth and IXth grades who had students with special educational needs in their classes. The research was carried out in four primary schools of the Municipality of Gjilan ("Abaz Ajeti" Primary School, "Rexhep Elmazi" Primary School, "Thimi Mitko" Primary School, and "Selami Hallaci" Primary School) and (N=5) support teachers and (N=5) assistants who work with students with special educational needs (grades 6-9) of these schools. Their selection has been random while classes, support teachers and assistants have been selected purposefully.

Data analysis was performed through quantitative and qualitative methods. To collect quantitative data for our research, we used questionnaires from the authors' Inclusion Index manual (Booth & Ainscow, 2011), adapted and adapted in the Albanian language by Prof. Dr. Naser Zabeli, MA. Lulavere Behluli. The student questionnaire was prepared in accordance with the Likert scale, which was divided into two parts, in the first part, the data on the student was requested, while in the second part, the data related to the research topic using closed-type questions with the possibility of choosing answers from I do not agree at all to I completely agree. For the realization of the questionnaire, we asked for permission from the parents, and they all filled it out. We analyzed the collected data through the SPSS package. The

data obtained from the support teachers and assistants was carried out through a qualitative method, a method that deals with research in the social sciences through which we collect and process non-numerical data that interpret the meaning of these data, which help us to understand social life. A semi-structured interview was used where all participants were interviewed separately. Semi-structured interviews are extremely suitable for a variety of valuable tasks, especially when they have multiple uses when open-ended questions are used and individuals are free to give their opinions independently, important opinions on unfamiliar issues (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015). The selection of participants was purposeful because all interview participants had relevant qualifications and experience in the process of observing students with special educational needs in the classroom. To get their opinions, 5 open questions were included in the semi-structured interview. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the participants, and they were informed that they would be presented with codes in our research.

Research hypotheses

Peers positively affect the socialization and academic achievements of students with special educational needs, and there is a significant difference between boys and girls compared to their non-atypical peers.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

For the realization of our research, we developed a quantitative survey which answered our research question: To what extent do peers influence academic development? 128 students (68 female and 60 male) aged 14 to 15 participated in the study, all respondents were eighth and ninth grade students of four elementary schools in the Municipality of Gjilan who had peers in their classes. with special educational needs. Our study aimed to obtain the opinions of support teachers and assistants who work with students with special needs in the schools selected in the research, we obtained the data through a semi-structured interview for the research question: How much do peers influence the socialization of students with special educational needs? 10 of them participated in the interview, 5 support teachers (4 female and 1 male) as well as 5 assistants (female) who work with students with atypical development. All 10 participants had experience with students with special educational needs who worked in the schools selected for research.

In the following, we have presented the results obtained from the responses of eighth and ninth grade students in the municipality of Gjilan, as well as the results obtained from support teachers and assistants.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample by gender

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	68	53.1	53.1
Male	60	46.9	46.9
Total	128	100.0	100.0

As a result, the effect of peer influence is high. The Table 2 gives a summary of the results performed with 128 participants. The survey assessed four factors related to the inclusion of students with special needs in schools: support from peers for participation in learning, willingness of peers to stay together with children with atypical characteristics, help provided by peers for students with special needs and cooperation in organized group activities. The measures used in the survey were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the lowest level of compliance and 5 indicating the highest level of compliance. The data in the table show that the average score for support from peers for participation in learning was 2.1094, for the desire of peers to stay together with children with atypical characteristics was 1.7422, for the help provided by peers for students with special needs was 1.5000 and for cooperation in organized group activities it was 1.2969.

TIJSEG

Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counseling   2023, volume 12, issue 1

Table 2. The influence of peers on the academic achievements of students with special needs

					Descriptive Statistics		Std. Deviation	Variance
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Sum**	**Mean**			
						Std. Error		
	Statistic	**Statistic**	**Statistic**	**Statistic**	**Statistic**	**Error**	**Statistic**	**Statistic**
Inclusion of students	128	1.00	5.00	270.00	2.1094	.09997	1.13105	1.279
Peer support	128	1.00	5.00	223.00	1.7422	.06769	.76587	.587
Socialization with atypical students	128	1.00	5.00	202.00	1.5781	.07491	.84750	.718
Peer help	128	1.00	5.00	192.00	1.5000	.06075	.68734	.472
Group cooperation	128	1.00	5.00	166.00	1.2969	.05586	.63195	.399
Valid N (listwise)	128							

The standard deviation and variance columns show how much the results differ from the mean. A low standard deviation and variance indicates that the results are more similar, and a high standard deviation and variance indicates that the results are more scattered. Finally, the table suggests that the mean scores for all factors are relatively low, with the highest mean score of 2.1094 for peer support for learning participation and socialization.

Table 3. The difference between boys and girls for the academic development of students with special needs.

			Gender		
			Female	**Male**	**Total**
I encourage him to answer and participate in the lesson	I completely agree	Count	33	22	55
		% of Total	25.8%	17.2%	43.0%
	Subscribe	Count	25	28	53
		% of Total	19.5%	21.9%	41.4%
	On the average	Count	9	10	19
		% of Total	7.0%	7.8%	14.8%
	I do not agree at all	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Total		Count	68	60	128
		% of Total	53.1%	46.9%	100.0%

The total number of participants is 128, with 68 women and 60 men. Overall, most participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (64.3%). A small percentage disagree (.8%).
From the obtained results to the differences and similarities of the results between boys and girls. Girls have more positive attitudes than boys towards children with special needs. This result is also supported by the research done by different authors.

The results showed a difference for the question of whether they encourage their peers with atypical development to participate in the lesson and as seen from the data we have benefited from, we confirmed our hypothesis where there is a significant difference between boys and girls compared to their peers with non-typical development atypical, which means that girls are more sociable and have developed the affective component than boys.

Quotes of support teachers and assistants of students with special educational needs
Support teachers and assistants for students with special educational needs are facilitators for teachers who have students with special needs and learning difficulties in their classes. Therefore, in highlighting this topic, we think it is important to include a semi-structured interview. In the question: to what extent do peers influence the socialization of students with atypical development? The subjects included in the interview gave the following answers:

Table 4. The table shows the codes used for each participant; for example, E1-F-40 refers to E- for Assistants, D-Support Teacher; 1- for counting the participants; F/M – gender and age 27.

Participant No	Gender	Age	Work eksperience	Code
P1	Female	27 years	3 years	E1-F-40
P2	Female	30 years	2 years	E2-F-38
P3	Female	33 years	2 years	E3-F-35
P4	Female	29 years	3 years	E4-F-29
P5	Female	31 years	1 years	E5-F-25
P6	Female	26 years	15 years	D1-F-20
P7	Male	44 years	2 years	D2-F-27
P8	Female	34 years	8 years	D3-F-42
P9	Female	32 years	15 years	D4-F-22
P10	Female	33 years	9 years	D5-F-46

E: Assistants for children with special educational needs D: Support teachers

"All the time they stay in the classroom, all the students have respect for their friend, and especially when there is a need for tasks during the learning process, they themselves express their willingness to offer themselves with them" (E-1-F-40).

"At the school where I work with the student with Autism, she has managed to exceed expectations in achieving results in the subject of Mathematics thanks to the help of her bank friend who is very sociable with her and provides a positive social model for her. other students of the class" E2-F-38.

"In the class where I work together with the guardian and the teacher of the Albanian language, we decided in the part of the achievements of the results in the Individual Education Plan, the student during the next three months to divide the sentence into syllables with the help of the friend from the bank because she is very social with it " E3-F-35

"I think that all students with special needs are helped and they do not lack socialization by teachers and classmates" E4-F-29.

"There is socialization between students with typical and atypical development, I have observed this in my school, I have observed this especially in the subject of Physical Education" E5-F-25.

"Students are sociable with their friends, but I think they lack information about the rights of children with special educational needs" D1-F-20.

"All inclusion is at the appropriate level in the classroom and students with special needs receive respect and help and support from their peers" D2-F-27.

"Teachers in the classroom are the key factors that should promote cooperation because only in this way they are socialized and achieve results in learning according to the regular curriculum" D3-F-42.

"During my nine years of experience in the Education System, I think that eighth and ninth grade students have the greatest sensitivity and willingness to support their friends with special needs during the learning process" D4-F-22.

"At the school where I work, at the beginning of the new school year, together with the assistant, the classroom teacher and the Albanian language teacher, when we compile the Individual Education Plan, for achieving results in the Albanian language or Mathematics, we highlight a friend or classmate who is sociable and we put him together in the first nearby bank together with their friend with special needs and through him we manage to achieve the goal of the Individual Education Plan" both in terms of socialization and academic achievement D5-F-46.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of this study was to explore the influence that peers have on the academic development of students with special educational needs in the last period of finishing primary schooling, this period

when they most need their support. We also confirmed our hypothesis that peers influence the socialization of students with special needs.

The research has drawn the conclusion that students with typical development are always willing to help their peers with atypical development in achieving the regular curriculum plan, especially in the difference we made between girls and boys, girls are closer to to help their friends with atypical development. We also support these data in the study conducted by (Bossaert, 2015) with 167 Belgian students where it turned out that girls had higher scores of the affective and behavioral component of attitudes towards disability compared to boys. According to national survey data in England, women have more positive attitudes than men towards disability based on the findings of (Staniland, 2009) , while the data of a study conducted in Russia showed that female students have a more positive attitude than male students towards disabilities (Iarskaia Smirnova, 2002).

The study aimed to find out: How much do peers influence the socialization of students with special needs? In this study, we researched various literature and conducted a semi-structured interview with support teachers and assistants of students with special educational needs in primary schools in Kosovo. The findings showed that students provide support, socialization either through activities within the classroom or extracurricular activities or even various games that they play at school, especially in group form.

In the primary schools of the Municipality of Gjilan, taking into account the total number of students, inclusiveness is being implemented according to the standards and administrative instructions that are in force. Based on the value of this research and from the practical and theoretical analyses, we have come to the conclusion that the hypothesis has been proven. The inclusiveness of children with special needs within the pre-university system is at a satisfactory level and that peers positively influence the socialization and academic achievements of students with special educational needs, especially girls are more sociable than boys compared to their peers with atypical development, but it still leaves room for improvement in the future in terms of infrastructure, social mentality, curriculum adapted to the needs of students, training for inclusive education, cooperation with parents, etc.

From the research results we can recommend that:

➢ First, the school should have more activities for these students, so that they can socialize with many e.g. activities for the school day, June 1 and various programs.

➢ Second, the Inclusion Index application is a very good and practical resource that helps school staff to improve the teaching and learning environment based on the social model of disability.

➢ Thirdly, in the schools of Kosovo, the number of support teachers and assistants should be increased according to the number of students with special needs, who should be considered as a resource specialist for the whole school and not responsible for working only with some students or classes.

➢ Finally, in-service teachers need to continuously qualify and develop their capacities to use effective inclusion strategies and manage classrooms where students are involved.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest
Declare that I have acted in accordance with ethical rules throughout the research and that there is no conflict of interest.

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EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SMART PHONE ADDICTION AND ONLINE COMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR AS THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FEAR LEVEL PRECURSORS

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behavior the precursors of fear of coronavirus (COVID-19) caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has affected the world since December 2019. The research was carried out with the relational screening model. The research was conducted by using random sampling method and in this context, Personal Information Form, COVID-19 Fear Scale, Smartphone Addiction Scale Short Form and Online Compulsive Buying Scale were used online via Google Forms. A total of 525 people, 318 women and 207 men, participated in the study. Correlation and regression analyzes were used to determine the relationships between fear of COVID-19, smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behaviors. Independent groups t-test analysis was performed to determine whether the variables differed according to gender and marital status. Correlation and regression analyzes were used to determine the relationships and directions between the variables. In the study, it was observed that there was a weak positive relationship between fear of COVID-19 and smartphone addiction, a weak positive relationship between fear of COVID-19 and online compulsive buying behavior, and a moderately positive relationship between smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behavior.

Keywords: Coronavirus fear, smartphone addiction, online compulsive buying.

INTRODUCTION

The noval coronavirus (Covid-19) emerged in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China, in December 2019 and spread rapidly, causing an infectious pandemic worldwide (Bao, Sun, Meng, Shi and Lu, 2020, p. 1). The virus was first observed in the animal market in the city of Wuhan and has spread rapidly. The virus which first affected the city of Wuhan and Hubei province, spread to all of China in a short while and then all of the world's countries (https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/:2020). Individual and public measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus have begun to have some effects on people's psychology. Although these psychological effects differ from person to person, it is seen that the most basic emotions are stress, anxiety and fear (Cakir Kardes, 2020:161). Banerjee (2020) stated the psychological effects of the coronavirus epidemic on people as: (a) anxiety of those who have experienced epidemics before (Sars, Ebola, etc.) that they will experience an epidemic again in the future, (b) fear of livelihood due to isolation and restrictions, (c) fear of leaving home, (d) concern for other family members and loved ones, (e) stocking of protective materials such as masks, disinfectants, etc., (f) stigmatization due to misinterpretation of symptoms such as cough, sneeze, mild fever, cold or

seasonal flu, (g) fear, stress and panic growing under the influence of social media and other communication tools.

The individual and public measures taken to control the coronavirus pandemic and the feelings of anxiety and fear experienced during this process have led people stay home. This situation has caused people to increase the usage time of internet and technological tools. (Cantekin & Arpaci, 2020, p. 1140). With the development of today's technology, smart phones are the leading technological tools that lead to changes in the behavior of the individuals (Sata, Celik, Erturk, & Tas, 2016, p. 157). Smartphones are the transformation of mobile phones into tiny pocket computers. They have many features such as taking photos, listening to music, accessing the internet, banking transactions, playing games, and video chatting, as well as calling and messaging operations performed by conventional mobile phones (Cuhadar, Demirel, Er, & Serdar, 2020, p. 2530).

The use of smartphones is increasing in Turkiye as well as in all countries of the world. It is stated that according to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), the rate of smartphone use in Turkey is 53.8% https://www.bik.gov.tr/ :2017), and Tasci (https://www.istanbul.edu.tr/: 2020) stated that the rate of smartphone use in Turkey as of this year is 77% according to the Mobile Communication Sector Report published by the Mobile Communication Tools and Information Technology Businessmen Association (MOBISAD). Many features of smartphones that differ from classical mobile phones make our lives easier (Sata, Celik, Erturk, & Tas, 2016, p. 157). Smartphones are thought to affect people physically or psychologically, as well as culturally. Individuals express their feelings and thoughts and explain to the outside world what kind of person they are through their smartphones (Mert & Ozdemir, 2018, p. 90). The fact that smartphones provide such convenience to our lives, direct our behaviors, such increasing usage rates in the world and in our country, and the continuous development of technology bring to mind the question of whether we are becoming dependent on smartphones.

Turkish Language Society (2020) defines addiction as "condition of being addicted, dependence". According to the Turkish Green Crescent Society (2020), addiction is defined as an individual's falling under the influence of a foreign substance or losing control over his/her behaviors. According to the Turkish Green Crescent Society (2020), addiction diagnosis criteria are: (a) developing tolerance, (b) onset of withdrawal symptoms, (c) unsuccessful efforts to control or end substance abuse or behavior considered as addiction, (d) obtaining the substance of abuse or repeating the behavior considered as addictive, spending a great deal of time in obtaining the substance and ending the substance abuse and addictive behavior, (e) deterioration in the social life of the individual, negative impact on the individual's work and personal activities (f) continuing to substance abuse or to exhibit behaviors that are considered addicted behaviors despite the onset and increase of physiological or psychological problems. It is seen that there are different conceptualizations for the concept of addiction in the literature. According to Incekara and Berra (2021), addiction is defined as an uncontrollable desire to which one becomes addicted as a result of a dysfunctional relationship with any object, substance or another individual. When the individuals cannot access the substances to which they are addicted, they may show withdrawal symptoms and develop tolerance.

When addiction is mentioned, addictions related to substance abuse come to mind. However, there are also behavioral addictions. Addictions such as gambling, internet and game addiction, shopping addiction, smartphone addiction are some of our behavioral addictions (Ulas & Eksi, 2019). Smartphone addiction can be defined as people's continued use of smartphones to such an extent that they disrupt their daily routines (Demirci, Akgonul, & Akpinar, 2015, p. 85). The first thing that individuals with smartphone addiction do when they wake up in the morning is to check on their smartphones, and the last thing they do when they go to bed at night is to take a glance at their smartphones. Besides, individuals with smartphone addiction check their smartphones at least 3-4 times a day without any reason (Suler, 2016, p. 14).

Like other behavioral addictions, smartphone addiction does not start overnight. At first, it appears as a pattern of behavior that does no or little harm to the individual. For instance, buying a phone for personal

safety, sending messages or checking social media accounts, etc (Ulas, 2017). It is stated that at the end of long-term use, the smartphone user cannot stop using the smartphone and continues to use it despite the negative consequences (Akif, Enver, & Sevim, 2019). The motivation behind smartphones use becomes an addiction rather than a need (Roberts, Yaya, & Monalis, 2014, p. 255). Smartphone addiction does not appear to be an official diagnosis included in American Psychiatric Association's (APA, 2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-V]. However, like other types of addiction, smartphone addiction also shows signs of addiction such as mood changes, cognitive-emotional and behavioral preoccupation, developing tolerance, failure, attempts to reduce success, experiencing interpersonal conflicts and relapses (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011, p. 3530). Smartphone addiction causes some psychological and social problems such as shyness, social anxiety, loneliness, anxiety and depression, as well as headaches and neck pain, and some disorders in the musculoskeletal system (Gunal & Pekcetin, 2018, p. 115; Hayirci & Sari, 2020; Aktas & Yilmaz, 2016).

According to the Turkish Language Association (2020), shopping is defined as "buying and selling". Based on the definition of Turkish Language Association, there is a person who sells the product (seller) and a person who buys it (buyer/consumer). Considering the literature, it is seen that there are many definitions of the consumer concept. A consumer is a genuine person who purchases or has the potential to purchase shopping materials for individual or his/her family needs and wants (Karabulut, 1981: 11'den Akt. Olcun, 2017, p. 3). Many models have been developed to understand the shopping dynamics and purchasing decisions of the consumers and to manage their behaviors. (Kirezli, 2015; Olcun, 2017). Motivations of individuals have been tried to be better understood by categorizing shopping and consumption behaviors. People's consumption behaviors are categorized as follows, respectively: (a) hedonic consumption, (b) utilitarian consumption, (c) impulsive consumption, (d) compulsive buying/shopping addiction (Tokgoz, 2019). Compulsive buying can be expressed primarily as a persistent, repetitive buying behavior that becomes the primary response to a negative event or negative emotion. While it provides some perceived benefits at the beginning, such chronic behavior becomes very difficult to stop and can ultimately lead to harmful consequences. Consequences of the relevant behavior can be not only economic but also psychological and social (Faber & O' Guinn, 1992, p. 459).

For most people, buying is a normal and routine part of daily life. For compulsive buyers, the inability to control of an overpowering impulse to buy takes over their lives and has significant and sometimes serious consequences. Compulsive buyers do not buy too much of a purchased good to get benefit or service since they seek to gain satisfaction through the purchasing process itself (O' Guinn & Faber, 1989, p. 147). In simple terms, individuals who are addicted to shopping act with strong, uncontrollable urges to buy. Since compulsive buying is not included in the DSM-V and ICD-11 (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems-11) classification, there are no clear diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying behavior. However, McElroy et al. (1994) suggested the following diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying behavior in their study: (a) buying efforts or tendencies that are usually unbearable, unsettling or unreasonable, (b) buying products even though there is no need, buying more products than the financial situation allows or exhibiting shopping behavior for longer than planned, not being able to control inappropriate buying behavior, (c) compulsive buying behavior leading to deterioration of personal, social and business life, and financial problems, (d) compulsive buying behavior does not occur only during periods of mania or hypomania attack. It has been determined that the reward mechanism in the brain plays a significant role in the formation and development of compulsive buying behavior. Additionally, it is also thought that the serotoninergic and dopaminergic systems play an active role in the development of addiction. These systems play a prominent role in the process and reveal the symptoms of addiction. Besides, social activities such as eating and going to the movies while shopping can increase the attractiveness of compulsive buying behavior.

The perceived compensatory benefits of compulsive buying behavior related to the individual's personal deficiencies such as self-esteem, self-identity, mood problems have been previously emphasized by researchers who have studied both compulsive and impulses behaviors. It is stated that the individual's

unmet needs and conditional parental attitudes, the individual's perfectionist approaches and cognitive distortions related to shopping play an active role in the formation of compulsive buying behavior (Kyrios, Forst, & Steketee, 2004, p. 253; Ozturk, Ogel, Evren, & Bilici, 2019, p. 762). It is considered that there are multiple factors affecting the compulsive buying behavior of the individual. Personality traits, post-modern consumption patterns and attitudes towards advertising are at the top of these factors (Eroglu, 2016, p. 256). Compulsive buying tendencies may end up with different moods and behavior patterns such as shopping again in the short and long term, feeling happy or depressed, feelings of regret and guilt after shopping, borrowing, alienation from social environment and isolation, and a decrease in the individual's self-belief and self-esteem (Korur & Kimzan, 2016, p. 45). In addition, individuals who exhibit compulsive buying behavior experience visible financial losses. Financial losses are followed by the deterioration of bilateral relations with family, social environment and people in business life (Yuncu & Kesebir, 2014, p. 143).

Importance of the Research

The increasing use of technology in recent years, the increase in social media use increase the narcissistic tendencies of individuals and their envy for each other, and the increase in socioeconomic levels and the increase in credit card use also increase the compulsive buying tendencies of individuals. Additionally, with technological progress, buying behavior has become even more uncontrollable and easy. With the developing technology, compulsive buying behavior is evolving into online compulsive buying behavior (Korur & Kimzan, 2016; Armagan & Temel, 2018). Online compulsive buying is defined as shopping made by accessing online shopping sites over the internet with computers, tablets and smart phones. The motivations of individuals who shows online compulsive buying behavior are similar to those of individuals with compulsive buying behavior. The most important reasons that trigger online compulsive buying behavior are discount campaigns, gift vouchers, promotions that become continuous on shopping sites. Besides, individuals can compare the prices of the products they will buy online and think that they save money. The idea of buying at an affordable price can gradually increase the shopping motivation of individuals. Additionally, since online shopping eliminates the concepts of time and space, the individual can shop at any time, which constantly increases the compulsive buying behavior (Deniz, 2020, p. 212; Civek & Ulusoy, 2020, p. 148; Duroy, Gorse, & Lejoyeux, 2014).

As a result of the relevant literature review, the aim of this study was determined as "to reveal whether there is a relationship between individuals' COVID-19 fear levels and smartphone addiction levels and online compulsive buying behaviors". In consequence of the general purpose determined, answers to the following questions were sought in this study.

1- What are the individual's COVID-19 fear levels, smartphone addiction levels, and online compulsive buying levels?

2- Do individuals' COVID-19 fear levels, smartphone addiction levels, and online compulsive buying levels differ depending on demographic variables such as gender and marital status?

3- Is there a significant relationship between individuals' COVID-19 fear levels, smartphone addiction levels, and online compulsive buying behaviors?

4- Do individuals' COVID-19 fear levels predict their smartphone addictions?

5- Do individuals' COVID-19 fear levels predict their online compulsive buying behavior?

6- Do individuals' smartphone addictions predict their online compulsive buying behavior?

7- Do individuals' COVID-19 fear levels and smartphone addictions significantly predict online compulsive buying behaviors together?

METHOD

Model of the Study
The aim of this study is to reveal whether there is a relationship between individuals' COVID-19 fear levels and smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behaviors. Therefore, relational screening method, one of the quantitative research methods, was used in the study. Relational screening model is the research model used to determine whether there is a relationship between at least two variables and also to determine the direction and level of any relationship (Simsek, 2012, p. 96).

Study Group
In this study, data were collected online via Google Forms between March 05, 2021 and June 05, 2022 using the appropriate sampling method. Due to the continuing psychological effects and health risks caused by the risk of catching Corona virus, appropriate sampling technique was preferred instead of face-to-face data collection methods (Buyukozturk et al.). Target population of the study consisted of 3 million 186 thousand 325 people between the ages of 18-55 living on the Anatolian side of Istanbul (Turkish Statistical Institute-TURKSTAT- https://www.tuik.gov.tr/). Sample size was calculated and the minimum number of participants for the 95 percent reliability level was found to be 384. It was aimed to differentiate the demographic characteristics of the participants and to equalize their likelihood of participating in the research (Buyukozturk & et al.). For this purpose, individuals living in different districts, in different occupational groups and with various socioeconomic characteristics were reached. 443 volunteers participated in the study. Demographic information form, Fear of COVID-19 Scale, Smartphone Addiction Scale Short Form, online compulsive Buying Scale were used to collect data.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form
Questions such as age range, gender and marital status were asked to the participants who participated in the study on a voluntary basis and answered the forms and scales, and general information about them was tried to be obtained.

COVID-19 Fear Scale
The scale was developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020) to determine the novel coronavirus fear levels experienced by individuals. The scale is a one-way scale and does not have a sub-dimension. The scale was graded as a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 7 items. Although there is no cut-off point in the scale, an increase in the score obtained from the scale is interpreted as the individual's COVID-19 fear level is high. Turkish adaptation of the scale was made by Bekiroglu, Korkaz and Ercan (2020). Corrected item-total correlations of scale items . were between 62 and 72 and the internal consistency coefficient was .88.

Smartphone Addiction Scale Short Form
The scale consists of 10 questions developed by Kwon et al. (2013) to determine the risk of smartphone addiction. The scale is a one-way scale and does not have a sub-dimension. The scale was graded as a 6-point Likert scale. There are no cut-off points on the scale. The high score obtained is interpreted as the high risk of smartphone addiction. Noyan et al. (2015) conducted the studies on the adaptation of the scale to Turkish and the measurement of its psychometric properties. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as 86 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was calculated as .92.

Online Compulsive Buying Scale
The scale is the adapted form of Bergen Shopping Addiction Scale developed by Andreassen et al. (2015) for online shopping in Turkish (Bozdag and Yalcinkaya Alkar, 2018). The scale consists of 28 items It is rated as a 5-point Likert and there is no cut-off score on the scale. The high score obtained from the scale shows that the level of online compulsive buying disorder of individuals increases. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency was calculated as .95.

Data Analysis

The data of the study were analyzed with the SPSS 22.0 package program. First of all, the descriptive statistics of the participants in the research were examined and the kurtosis and skewness values were examined in order to determine whether the data showed a normal distribution in order to be able to analyze. It was observed that the data showed normal distribution and independent sample t-test was applied to determine whether the variables differed according to demographic variables such as gender and marital status. Finally, Pearson Correlation Analysis and regression analysis were performed to determine whether the variables were related to each other.

FINDINGS

In order to define the descriptive information of the participants, demographic information of the participants is as in Table-1.

Table 1. Demographic data of participants.

Variables	Group	n	%
Gender	Male	207	39.4
	Female	318	60.6
Marital Status	Married	248	47.2
	Single	277	52.8
	15-19	138	26.3
	20--24	34	6.5
	25-29	118	22.5
	30-34	119	22.7
	35-39	59	11.2
Age Range	40-44	24	4.6
	45 - 49	20	3.8
	50-54	4	0.8
	55-59	6	1.1
	60-64	3	0.6
	65+	0	0

Study sample consists of 207 male (39.4%) and 318 female (60.6%) participants. 248 of the participants were married (47.2%), 277 were single (52.8%); the age ranges were 15-19 (26.3%) for 138 people, 20-24 (6.5%) for 34 people, 25-29 (22.5%) for 118 people, 30-34 (22.7%) for 119 people, 35-39 (11.2%) for 59 people, 40-44 (4.6%) for 24 people, 45-49 (3.8%) for 20 people, 50-54 (0.8%) for 4 people, 55-59 (1.1%) for 6 people, and 60-64 (0.6%) for 3 people.

T-Test Results of Participants' COVID-19 Fear, Smartphone Addiction, and online compulsive Buying Behavior Scores by Genderare given in Table 2:

Table 2. T-Test Results of Participants' COVID-19 Fear, Smartphone Addiction, and online compulsive Buying Behavior Scores by Gender.

Variables	Group	n	*Mean*	Std.Dev.	t	p
Covid-19 Fear Scale	Male	207	2.10	.93	-5.819	.001*
	Female	318	2.60	.97		
Smartphone Addiction Scale	Male	207	4.68	1.98	.229	.819
	Female	318	6.64	2.16		
Online compulsive Buying Behavior Scale	Male	207	.46	.77	-2.956	.003*
	Female	318	.67	.81		

*p<.05

In the research, T-test was conducted to determine whether the mean scores of male and female participants from COVID-19 fear scales of smartphone addiction, and online compulsive buying behaviors differed. When Table-2 is examined, the levels of COVID-19 fear and online compulsive buying behaviors differ significantly by gender (p<.05), whereas smartphone addiction levels do not differ significantly by gender (p<.05). The COVID-19 fear levels of females($\overline{X}$=2.60) were significantly

higher than the COVID-19 fear levels of males ($\overline{X}$=2.10). Females' online compulsive buying behavior levels ($\overline{X}$=.67) were significantly higher than males' online compulsive buying behavior levels ($\overline{X}$=.46).

T-Test Results of Participants' COVID-19 Fear, Smartphone Addiction, and online compulsive Buying Behavior Scores by Marital Status are given in Table 3.

Table 3. T-Test Results of Participants' COVID-19 Fear, Smartphone Addiction, and online compulsive Buying Behavior Scores by Marital Status.

Variables	Group	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	t	p
Covid-19 Fear Scale	Married	248	2.51	.99	2.207	.028*
	Single	277	2.32	.97		
Smartphone Addiction Scale	Married	248	4.35	2.00	-3.175	.002*
	Single	277	4.93	2.14		
Online compulsive Buying Behavior Scale	Married	248	.58	.84	-.385	.701
	Single	277	.60	.77		

*p<.05

In the study, T-test was conducted to determine whether the mean scores of married and single participants from the scales of fear of COVID-19, smartphone addiction, and online compulsive buying behavior differed. When Table-3 is examined, fear of COVID-19 and smartphone addiction levels differ significantly according to marital status. The COVID-19 fear levels of married people ($\overline{X}$=2.51) were significantly higher than the COVID-19 fear levels of single people ($\overline{X}$=2.32). The smartphone addiction levels of singles ($\overline{X}$=4.93) were significantly higher than the smartphone addiction levels of married people ($\overline{X}$=4.35) (p<.05). online compulsive buying behavior levels do not differ significantly according to marital status (p>.05).

Correlation Analysis Results Regarding Participants' COVID-19 Fear, Smartphone Addiction, and online compulsive Buying Behavior Scales are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis Results Regarding Participants' COVID-19 Fear, Smartphone Addiction, and online compulsive Buying Behavior Scales.

	Fear of Covid-19	Smartphone Addiction	Online compulsive Buying Behavior Scale
Fear of Covid-19	1	.266*	.294*
Smartphone Addiction	.266*	1	.466*
Online compulsive Buying Behavior Scale	.294*	.466*	1

*p<.05

According to Pearson correlation analysis results shown in Table-4, a weak positive correlation between individuals' COVID-19 fear levels and smartphone addiction levels (r=.266; p<.01), and a weak positive correlation between COVID-19 fear levels and online compulsive buying behaviors (r =.294; p<.01) were observed. It was also observed that there was a positive moderate level (r =.466; p<.01) between smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behaviors.

The results of the Regression Analysis on Whether Individuals' COVID-19 Fear Levels Predict Smartphone Addictions are given in Table 5:

In the regression analysis, it was determined that individuals' fears of COVID-19 significantly predicted smartphone addiction. COVID-19 fear levels of individuals explain 7% of the total variance in smartphone addictions (p<.05). In other words, as individuals' fear of COVID-19 increases, their smartphone addiction also increases.

Table 5. Regression Analysis on Whether Individuals' COVID-19 Fear Levels Predict Smartphone Addictions.

Independent Variable	B	Std. Error	(β)	t	p
Fear of COVID-19	3.29	.233	.26	14.146	.00

R= .26   Rsquare = .071   F $_{(1,523)}$ =39.758 p=.000
Dependent Variable: Smartphone Addiction

The results of Regression Analysis on Whether Individuals' COVID-19 Fear Levels Predict online compulsive Buying Behaviors are given in Table 6.

Table 6. The results of Regression Analysis on Whether Individuals' COVID-19 Fear Levels Predict online compulsive Buying Behaviors.

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	(β)	t	p
Fear of COVID-19	.018	.089	.294	0.20	.00

R= .29   Rsquare = .086   F $_{(1,523)}$ =49.484 p=.000
Dependent Variable: online compulsive Buying

In the regression analysis, it was determined that individuals' fear of COVID-19 significantly predicted their online compulsive buying behavior. COVID-19 fear levels of individuals explain 9% of the total variance of online compulsive buying behaviors (p<.05). In other words, as individuals' fear of COVID-19 increases, their online compulsive buying behaviors also increase.

The results of Regression Analysis on Whether Individuals' Smartphone Addictions Predict online compulsive Buying Behaviors are given in Table 7:

Table 7. Regression Analysis on Whether Individuals' Smartphone Addictions Predict online compulsive Buying Behaviors.

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	(β)	t	p
Smartphone Addiction	.23	.076	.46	3.146	.00

R= .46   Rsquare = .217   F $_{(1,523)}$ =145.367 p=.000
Dependent Variable: online compulsive Buying

In the regression analysis, it was determined that smartphone addictions of individuals significantly predicted online compulsive buying behaviors. Smartphone addictions of individuals explain their online compulsive buying behaviors by 25% (p<.05).

The results of the Multiple Regression Analysis on Predicting online compulsive Buying Behaviors of the Participants are given in Table 8:

Table 8. Multiple Regression Analysis on Predicting online compulsive Buying Behaviors of the Participants.

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	(β)	t	p
Fear of Covid-19	.149	.032	.183	4.64	.00
Smartphone Addiction	.161	.015	.418	10.61	.00

R= .49   R²adjusted = .25   F $_{(2,522)}$ =86.356 p=.000
Dependent Variable: online compulsive Buying

Multivariate linear regression analysis was performed to predict the online compulsive buying behavior variable using the fear of COVID-19 and smartphone addiction variables. When Table-6 is examined, the variables of fear of COVID-19 and smartphone addiction show a positive and significant relationship with online compulsive buying behavior (R=.49, R²adjusted=.25; p<.05). Fear of COVID-19 and smartphone addiction variables together account for 25% of the total variance of online compulsive

buying behavior. According to the standardized regression coefficient (β), smartphone addiction predicts online compulsive buying behavior positively and moderately significantly (β=.42, $t_{(522)}$=10.61), fear of COVID-19 predicts online compulsive buying positively and weakly significantly (β=.18, $t_{(522)}$=4.65) p<.05.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was carried out to reveal whether there is a relationship between smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behaviors as predictors of COVID-19 fear level that has emerged during the novel coronavirus pandemic that has been affecting the world since December 2019. In line with this purpose, when the average of the COVID-19 fear levels of the participants in the research was examined, according to the gender variable, it was seen that there was a statistically significant difference. Women have a significantly higher fear level of novel coronavirus than men. In his research, Duman (2020) stated that the fear of COVID-19 did not reveal a significant difference according to the gender variable. In their study, Gashi (2020) stated that women's COVID-19 fear levels were higher than men's, but there was no statistically significant difference between them. Bekiroglu, Korkmaz and Ercan (2020) reported that, when the fear of COVID-19 was examined in terms of the gender variable, the fear levels of women were significantly higher than that of men, and Gencer (2020) reported that women's COVID-19 fear levels were significantly higher than that of men.

When the mean of COVID-19 fear levels were analyzed in terms of marital status variable, it was seen that the fear levels of married people were significantly higher than those of singles. Gencer (2020) found in his study that singles feel more fear than married people. Ciftci and Demir (2020) reported in their research that the COVID-19 fear levels of married people were higher than single people, but this did not constitute a statistical significance. In their study, Atay et al. (2020) found that the COVID-19 fear levels of the participants did not differ according to the mineral state variable.

When smartphone addiction was examined according to the gender variable, no statistically significant difference was found. When looked at the relevant literature, it was seen that the gender variable did not make a statistically significant difference on smartphone addiction. (Kuyucu, 2020; Minaz & Cetinkaya Bozkurt, 2017). In their research, Aktas and Yilmaz (2016) stated that women spend more time on smartphones than men and have more anxiety about controlling their smartphones.

When the smartphone addiction levels were analyzed in terms of marital status variable, it was observed that the risk of smartphone addiction of singles was higher than that of married people. Tohumcu (2018) stated that singles have a higher risk of smartphone addiction than that of married people in his study on internet addiction, smartphone addiction, self-esteem and loneliness variables with the participation of 230 people. Ankara, Tekin and Oz (2020), in their study with 155 participants researching the socioeconomic factors affecting smartphone addiction, stated that singles were busy with smartphones for a longer time than married people, and their smartphone addiction levels were significantly higher than married people.

When the statistical data of online compulsive buying behavior were examined, it was observed that the gender variable was an element that made a significant difference on buying behavior, and it was seen that online compulsive buying behavior levels of women were higher than men. In their study, Droy, Gorse, and Lejoyeux (2014) stated that the gender factor was not a variable that had a statistically significant effect on online compulsive buying behavior. In his study, Akkas (2021) also found that gender is not a factor that makes a significant difference in online shopping addiction. Armagan and Temel (2018) stated that women's online buying behavior levels were higher than men's. The marital status of the participants did not show a statistically significant difference in online compulsive buying behaviors. When the relevant literature is reviewed, studies stating that marital status was not a factor affecting attitudes towards online shopping were seen (Ozguven, 2011; Akkas, 2016).

In the research, the main purpose is to determine whether there is a relationship between fear of COVID-19, smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behaviors. As a result of the statistical

analyses carried out in line with this purpose, the correlation coefficient between fear of COVID-19 and smartphone addiction was determined as .26 and a weak positive correlation was observed between the variables. The correlation coefficient between fear of COVID-19 and online compulsive buying behavior was determined as .29 and there was a weak positive correlation. In addition, the correlation coefficient between smartphone addiction and online compulsive buying behavior was determined as .47 and it was interpreted as there is a positive moderate relationship between the variables. In his study investigating the factors affecting online compulsive buying behaviors of university students, Deniz (2020) stated that there is a positive moderate relationship between problematic phone use and online buying behavior. In his study, Kukrek (2021) determined that there was a weak positive correlation between fear of coronavirus and online compulsive buying behavior (r=.20).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The coronavirus pandemic, which we have been exposed to since 2019, has emerged as a situation we have not experienced before. For reducing the spread of the disease during the pandemic process, curfews, closure of places with high human circulation such as places of worship, shopping malls, frequent exposure to anxiety producing information pollution in the written and verbal media, as well as on social media, may have triggered people's anxiety about contracting COVID-19 virus. Additionally, the measures taken may have caused people to withdraw from their work and social lives, and the only entertainment elements to be limited to home activities and internet-based applications. During the social isolation process, people's smartphone usage time has increased in order to meet their basic needs such as having fun, following the developments, continuing their business life, shopping, and thus they they may have developed smartphone addiction. In this process, people have experienced the comfort of shopping through unlimited options, regardless of time and space, thanks to internet-based mobile applications. This comfort process is further multiplied by the fact that mobile shopping sites offer continuous campaigns and discounts throughout the year. Besides, the anxiety of contracting the virus may have caused people to use the strategy of managing anxiety by shopping and distraction. Apart from this, following discounts, taking advantage of the discounts and the happiness of buying cheap products may have played an important role in reinforcing the compulsive buying behaviors of individuals. The fact that the research data were collected online via Google Forms may have affected the sincere response levels of the participants. The results of the research show that although time has passed since the Covid 19 process, its effects continue and leave lasting effects on people's behavior. It is considered that more in-depth quantitative and qualitative scientific research in behavioral changes caused by corona virus can be more enlightening in this field. Another suggestion could be to conduct scientific research on how people's withdrawal from social life due to fear of disease affects other types of addictions and communication skills other than technology. In conclusion, it is considered that it would be beneficial to conduct social awareness and preventive studies on technology addiction and online compulsive buying behavior by the relevant stakeholders.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been considered carefully. The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Turkish International Journal of Special Education and Guidance & Counseling   2023, volume 12, issue 1

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