

Full Length Research Paper

Reflection of policy documents in early years' educational settings during the COVID-19 pandemic

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This study investigates the implementation of policy documents in early years' educational settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments over the entire world declared and created new disapplication to provide a clear understanding on how they can manage the pandemic process. Likewise, Turkish ministries created policy documents which help teachers keep children and themselves healthy and safe, which is the new normal. This study was conducted on 118 preschool teachers. They completed the survey consisting of 47 closed-ended and 8 open-ended, 61 items in total. The research indicates that Turkish policy documents overlap Japan, Australian, English, Hungarian documents in some points. The policy documents are reflected based on the pre-school teachers' perspective who found the documents helpful in the school settings. Practical problems are also explained. However, interestingly, another point emerged in this research spontaneously that the language of the policy documents is negative.

Key words: COVID-19, early childhood education, policy, practice, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, Coronavirus (COVID-19) had spread from China to the world all-over. After World Health Organisation (WHO) globally announced the COVID-19 is a danger for public health and decided it is an important epidemic on the 30th of January 2020, many countries applied variously protective policies (Zang and Liu, 2020) such as closures of schools and early childhood care and education centres; national lockdown to provide social distance and keep safe public health. Education was also

affected by the pandemic as national lockdowns requirements. On this occasion, many schools kept distance learning policies for a while and then some schools reduced the number of students in classrooms (Visnjic-Jetic et al., 2021). However, studies highlighted that these might have some disadvantages for children, like staying at homes throughout with their families and children experience stress due to a sudden change in environment (Wang et al., 2020). This circumstance gave

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teachers many duties to support children's health and their well-being such as preparing them to cope with unpredictable situations, and being aware of hygiene rules (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020). The contagious pandemic forced communities and educational stakeholders to discover new ways to manage conditions of life (World Bank, 2020). In fact, many countries temporary closed their schools to contain the spread of COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2021). The closure has affected more than 1.2 billion students world-wide (UNESCO, 2021), including more than 20 million students, and 1 million 564 thousand pre-school children in Turkey (Arik, 2020). In this context, this became a global educational problem; millions of students and hundreds of thousands of teachers found themselves in the extremely complicated and unpredictable process. In Turkey, the Ministry of National Education decided to apply distance learning from 15 March, 2020, and, with some improvements, this form of teaching continued till the end of 2019/2020 academic term. The first term of 2020/2021 school year started in 2020 September with reduced number of students in face-to-face setting, known as diluted education. There were some modifications and amended policy documents. Unfortunately, the implication was difficult and the distance learning came back because the number of cases of COVID-19 increased. Turkish teachers had to change their methods and practices many times from traditional system to online system, known as modern system. However, the teachers in early years' education sector faced many troubles during the COVID-19 period; interestingly this period was longer for early years compared to other levels. For instance, there was no in-service education about the process and no technological supports (Aytaç, 2021). Duran (2021) highlighted that teachers had trouble in the planning interactive learning process for early years' children during the COVID-19. The policy documents were developed, updated and modified to promote children's well-being, health, and development.

These numbers of new tasks and unpredictable process of the pandemic increased Turkish pre-school teachers' responsibilities and worries. At this point the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, and Ministry of National Education produced an emergency policy documents to support them during the pandemic and supplied some instruments for educational stakeholders, parents and children.

The current research

This research aims to present a short form of Turkish educational policy implemented for pre-school children in Turkey during the global pandemic. The research

considers teachers' expectation, their theories, and current situations. At the same time, the results of the research will shed a light for policy makers for them to understand teachers' perspectives as they are implementers of the policy documents. The gap between policy makers and implementers will be filled as this research came up with an evaluation of policy documents. The need for policy documents and their language (rhetoric) and teachers' thoughts were noted. The main aim was to learn whether the policy instructions were operated during the diluted education period and what the teachers needed more or less as well as their suggestions. In this context, the main problem was formulated as: *did the Turkish teachers in early years' education cope with implementation of policy documents?* The main problem was investigated with the three specific problems:

1. Which policy documents did the teachers use?
2. To what extent did the teachers use the related policy documents?
3. Did they reorganize/arrange the learning process and how?

As highlighted above, there were difficulties especially in managing and implementing the policy documents during the diluted educational process. Unquestionably, there were many issues which led to this research. However, policy documents had less impact because of unimplementable context such as infection prevention, control action, preparation of less contact activities in early years. Early years education institutions were kept with cautions taken in some countries such as Germany, England. The policy documents of these countries provided to workers in the education sector helped to successful manage their operation during the pandemic (Karaoğlu and Özbay-Karlıdağ, 2021). In Turkey, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services operated together. In this research, all the documents created by the related ministries were implemented in the early year's education sector from the teachers' perspectives. This makes the research unique based on the teachers' thoughts which drive the research and help children to keep themselves healthy under the procedures (policy documents) during the diluted educational process. It has been questioned in this research are how the policy documents used actively and effectively in the early years education field. We hope to contribute to this line by firstly determining the gaps of implementations and then making suggestions to fill the gaps.

METHOD

This study, a mixed-method research, utilized both qualitative and

Table 1. Participants' demographics.

Variable	Categories	Frequency
Gender	Female	116
	Male	2
Age	25 and under	3
	26-30	14
	31-39	61
	40-49	38
	50 and above	2
Educational level	Two-years degree	3
	Bachelor degree	108
	Master's degree	7
Teaching experience	1-5 years	10
	6-10 years	29
	11-15 years	46
	16-20 years	12
	20 years and above	21

Source: Authors

quantitative approaches to determine how much precautions were taken in preschool education based on the policy documents during the COVID-19, and the teachers' thoughts about all procedures of precautions, their suggestions, and criticisms. Whereas qualitative research contains variables placed in specific categories due to similar characteristics, quantitative research is numerical and can be ordered or ranked (Bluman, 2013). The mixed-method provides a way to check the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods (Maxwell, 2013). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative and quantitative data collection process could be done concurrently in mixed research design. This study used convergent parallel mixed design. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. The preschool teachers were invited to complete an online survey which included 47 closed-ended questions and 8 open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions allowed teachers to select an answer from opinions provided while the open-ended questions allowed respondents to voice individualized answers (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Participants, sample and procedures

For the selection of preschool teachers to be included in the study, snowball sampling was used. In accordance with this, the researchers firstly sent the online survey to preschool teachers who they could reach easily from different regions of Turkey. Afterward, each preschool teacher, who filled out the online survey, passed the online survey access link to other preschool teachers they knew. In this way, the researchers reached 118 preschool teachers. The demographic data of the participants can be found in Table 1. Almost all of the participants that completed the survey were women and only two were men. Teachers were mostly between the ages of 31 and 39; their teaching experience was mostly between 11 and 15 years. Also, 92% of the participants have a Bachelor's

degree (Table 1).

Instruments

The researchers used survey to collect data from the study participants. The instrument was a Google survey completed by all preschool teachers. The survey was administered online sent through email. The survey was created by the researchers to reveal how the precautions taken in accordance with the policy documents in preschool education during the COVID-19 and the teachers' thoughts about all the procedures of precautions, their suggestions, and criticisms. The survey consists of 47 closed-ended questions. The first question is 1=yes; 2=no. The second is 1=yes; 2=no, and 3=1 have no information. Using a 4-point Likert scale where 1= no knowledge, 2=never used, 3=occasionally used and 4= quite useful (questions three to 14). Question 15 to 47 offered 1=yes and 2=no. The survey questions were created by making use of the policy documents which are derived from the Ministry of National Education, Turkish Standards Institute, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Family Labour and Social Services. The precautions to be taken as stated in the policy documents (Ministry of National Education and Turkish Standards Institute, 2020; Ministry of Health, 2020; Ministry of Family Labour and Social Services, 2020) were turned into survey questions. In addition to the 47 close-ended questions, eight open-ended questions for the preschool teachers were provided. In close ended questions content, 12 of 47 are teachers' level of use of the policy documents on COVID-19, 13 of 47 are about general precautions, 7 of 47 are the precautions of cleaning and disinfection, 6 of 47 are the precautions of educational environment, and 7 of 47 are the precautions of learning process. Two of them are about whether they were informed by their institutions about the fight against COVID-19 and whether they were prepared for infection prevention and control action plan. In

the open-ended questions, it was asked whether there were any other precautions taken apart from the close-ended questions. In the open-ended questions, it was aimed to obtain information about the following four situations: whether there are any measures taken other than close-ended questions; the adequacy of the precautions taken; what precautions need to be developed; and the most successful practice in their schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ethical considerations

The participants were reassured of their confidentiality and considered by the researchers. The following precautions were implemented to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants: (1) pseudonyms were used instead of the participants' names to protect their identities. For example, pseudonyms such as P1 (participant 1), P2 (participant 1) etc. were used when citing important parts of participants' views to support the findings. Also, any information containing personal identifiers were deleted from the participants' answers. (2) All data were received from the online survey. Although the data obtained from the online survey are hosted in a cloud server, only researchers can access them with their own passwords. The data hosted on a cloud server will only be stored for 3 years.

Data analysis

In the analysis of quantitative data, descriptive statistics was used. It allowed us to describe the gathered information using by numerical form (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The descriptive statistics are useful tools in presenting information from the Likert-type scale survey items. In this research, the findings obtained from the Likert-type scale survey items were presented using numerical format. Qualitative research was used to assist with the understanding of the open-ended questions. The goal of this research was discovering teachers' thoughts of the precautions taken during COVID-19 by using open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analysed through content analyse. During the content analysis, teachers' statements which support the findings obtained from the quantitative data were used directly (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

FINDINGS

In this part of the research, the findings will be presented within the framework of sub-problems which are obtained from the analysis of the data collected in accordance with the purpose of the research.

The use of the policy documents

The use of the policy documents was identified as "Which policy documents did the teachers use?" There were three questions for the teachers to explore this issue. Firstly, the teachers were asked whether they were informed about the fight against COVID-19 or not by their institutions. While 93.2% of the teachers stated that they were informed, 6.8% of the teachers stated that they were not. The second question was whether the

teachers' institutions were prepared to prevent the infection and for the control action plan after the lock-down. Here, 52.5% of the teachers stated that their institutions were prepared for the infection prevention and control action plan, but 10.2% of the teachers stated that their institutions were not prepared. Interestingly, there are 37.3% of the teachers stated that they did not know whether their institutions were prepared for the infection prevention and control action plan. The teachers, who stated that their schools were prepared for the infection prevention and control action plan, reported the preparing process:

"The guides prepared by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Education were followed" (Respondent no. 83); "All the instructions of the Ministry of National Education were applied" (Respondent no. 7); "The plan was prepared in consideration of the Ministry of National Education's policy documents and videos" (Respondent no. 75); "We took all necessary precautions based on the lead of the Ministry of National Education" (Respondent no. 32).

Most of the teachers commented that they formulated their infection prevention and control action plan based on the policy documents. One described the preparing process of the plan as follows:

"We adopted the Ministry of National Education's information into our school's conditions." (Respondent no. 107), "There was collaboration between the Ministry of National Education and the local government" (Respondent no. 69).

In this context, the evidence suggests that the action plan of the infection prevention and control is prepared based on the policy document from *Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Education guides* and schools' conditions. At the same time, it can be seen that some schools carry out this design and implement the plan process in cooperation with the municipalities to provide hygiene to the school buildings.

Lastly, the third question asked the teachers was how they use the policy documents about COVID-19. The statistics on teachers' level of use of the policy documents about COVID-19 are given in Table 2. The policy document of Ministry of National Education used frequently "Improving Hygiene Conditions in Educational Institutions and Infection Prevention Control Guidance" (43.2%) and "Children Aid Guidance for Families" (41.5%). The policy document of Ministry of Health used frequently "Ministry of Health New Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Information Page" (42.4%), and also the policy document of Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services used frequently "Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) In

Table 2. Teachers' level of use of the policy documents about COVID-19.

The ministry that created the policy document	Policy documents	Level of use	Frequency	Percent
Ministry of National Education	Improving Hygiene Conditions in Educational Institutions and Infection Prevention Control Guidance	No knowledge	19	16.1
		Never used	25	21.2
		Occasionally used	23	19.5
		Quite useful	51	43.2
	Close Interest to Distance Learning	No knowledge	28	23.7
		Never used	29	24.6
		Occasionally used	28	23.7
	Learn and Fun with 100 Items	Quite useful	33	28
		No knowledge	38	32.2
		Never used	29	24.6
		Occasionally used	21	17.8
	Daily Activity Program	Quite useful	30	25.4
		No knowledge	19	16.2
		Never used	26	22
		Occasionally used	26	22
	Learn While Having Fun, Have Fun While Learning	Quite useful	47	39.8
		No knowledge	33	28
		Never used	25	21.2
		Occasionally used	27	22.8
	A Guidance for Youth in the Coronavirus Outbreak Process	Quite useful	33	28
No knowledge		35	29.7	
Never used		36	30.5	
Occasionally used		21	17.8	
Children Aid Guidance for Families	Quite useful	26	22	
	No knowledge	20	16.9	
	Never used	27	22.9	
	Occasionally used	22	18.7	
Information Guide for Adults	Quite useful	49	41.5	
	No knowledge	20	16.9	
	Never used	36	30.5	
	Occasionally used	23	19.5	
Ministry of Health New Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Information Page	Quite useful	39	33.1	
	No knowledge	18	15.3	
	Never used	24	20.3	
	Occasionally used	26	22	
Ministry of Health	Outbreak Management and Study Guide	Quite useful	50	42.4
		No knowledge	28	23.7
		Never used	28	23.7
		Occasionally used	28	23.7
Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	Guidelines for Parents and Persons Responsible for Child Care in the Coronavirus Process	Quite useful	34	28.9
		No knowledge	25	22.2
		Never used	37	31.4
		Occasionally used	30	25.4
		Quite useful	26	22

Table 2. Contd.

Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Information Document	No knowledge	22	18.6
		Never used	40	33.9
		Occasionally used	23	19.5
		Quite useful	33	28

Source: Authors

formation Document" (28%).

Precautions based on policy documents

Precautions taken based on the policy documents come from the second research question: "To what extent did the teachers take precautions based on the policy documents?" Table 3 shows that the results of frequency analysis were applied to determine whether the teachers have practiced the general precautions which were prepared based on the policy documents. Table 3 indicates that majority of the teachers applied the general precautions of policy documents. 96.6% of the teachers considered "Visual stimuli used to comply with the new perception of hygiene and hand washing and the social distance rule; while minority of the teachers (33.9%) considered, „The temperature of children is recorded more than once during the day". Majority of the teachers stated that they applied the necessary precautions for cleaning and disinfection in line with the policy documents. The results of frequency analysis that was applied to determine whether the teachers received the precautions of cleaning and disinfection to be taken in line with the policy documents are given in Table 4. In Table 4, it is seen that more than half of the teachers apply all the precautions of cleaning and disinfection. However, almost all of the teachers stated that they provide adequate ventilation in the environment after using cleaning products (94.1%) and that they dispose of garbage safely on a daily basis (94.9%). In this research, there is another point that must highlighted: food and serving. While 97.5% of the teachers (n=115) stated that they stopped serving food, only 2.5% of the teachers (n=3) stated that they kept serving food. All the teachers, who said that they kept serving food, stated that the children brought their prepared food from their home and that the children and the staff washed hand before and after meal. One of the teachers from the food serving schools stated that they served food in the classroom as suggested by the policy documents; on the contrary, two of the teachers used the dining hall. Overall, most of the teachers commented that they applied precautions in the educational environment as suggested by the policy documents. Table 5 indicates the result of frequency

analysis that was applied to determine whether the teachers implemented the precautions in the educational environment based on the policy documents.

There is a further question whether the teachers clean and disinfect the school environment. *"We advise the children not to use any of their friends' belongings except their own"* (Respondent no. 61). On the other hand, few teachers (n=3) stated that they all replaced the bins with pedal ones. One of them said the traditional taps were replaced with sensor taps. Another one removed the carpet in the classroom and requested for personal water bottle for each child. Seven teachers stated that the tables and chairs in the classroom were positioned considering physical distance. Four teachers labelled table and chair with the children's names in the classroom. Moreover, only a teacher spotted *"The classes are divided into two groups. The first group comes to school on Monday and Tuesday, and the second group comes on Thursday and Friday"* (Respondent No. 28).

The precautions of learning process

The precautions of learning process were identified as "Did they reorganize/arrange the learning process and how?" In order to examine this sub-question, teachers were asked a total of eight questionnaire items, seven of which were close-ended and only one was open-ended. The teachers answered the close-ended questionnaire items based on two options as "yes / no". The results of frequency analysis are given in Table 6. Apart from these precautions taken in line with the policy documents, teachers were asked whether they had different practices related to the learning process and if so, what are they. While the majority of the teachers stated that they did not do a different practice, some of the teachers said that:

"We planned contactless plays and individual activities. Currently, we are progressing very efficiently and smoothly." (Respondent no. 3), *"We enable children to play contactless plays"* (Respondent no. 16), *"I keep away from activities that bring children together as much as possible."* (Respondent no. 18), *"Each child's table and chair has been labelled. Usually individual table*

Table 3. The general precautions.

Precautions	Yes/no	Frequency	Percent
The temperature of children routinely is taking and measurements of the temperature are recorded	Yes	87	73.7
	No	31	26.3
The temperature of children is recorded more than once during the day.	Yes	40	33.9
	No	78	66.1
All children wear face masks while in school	Yes	106	89.8
	No	12	10.2
It is monitored whether children and family members have symptoms of COVID-19	Yes	97	82.2
	No	21	17.8
There is a hand sanitizer at the entrance and exit of the school for the children	Yes	113	95.8
	No	5	4.2
The places where hand antiseptics are available are arranged in a way that does not endanger the safety of children (e.g. swallowing, etc.)	Yes	108	91.5
	No	10	8.5
Visitors are unable to visit except during emergencies	Yes	107	90.7
	No	11	9.3
Teachers and all staff wear masks	Yes	110	93.2
	No	8	6.8
The temperature of teachers and other personnel is also measured and recorded	Yes	76	64.4
	No	42	35.6
The clothes that teachers and staff wear inside and outside the school are different	Yes	46	39
	No	72	61
Teachers and staff keep 1-meter physical- distance from others and avoid close interaction (such as shaking hands)	Yes	110	93.2
	No	8	6.8
An isolation room has been created in the school	Yes	67	56.8
	No	51	43.2
Visual stimuli are used to comply with the new perception of hygiene and hand washing and the social distance rule	Yes	114	96.6
	No	4	3.4

Source: Authors

Table 4. The precautions of cleaning and disinfection.

Precaution	Yes/no	Frequency	Percentage
Hard surfaces are cleaned every day with detergent.	Yes	101	85.6
	No	17	14.4
Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, electrical switches, sinks, toilet seat adapters, tables, chairs are cleaned and disinfected daily.	Yes	92	78
	No	26	22
The disinfectants approved by the Ministry of Health are used	Yes	107	90.7
	No	11	9.3
Wardrobes where each child will keep their personal belongings are separated and their spare clothes are put in their own lockers in separate bags.	Yes	103	87.3
	No	15	12.7
Cleaning cloths are separated according to usage area and are stored after each use after being cleaned properly.	Yes	93	78.8
	No	25	21.2
Adequate ventilation is provided in the environment after using cleaning products.	Yes	111	94.1
	No	7	5.9
Garbage is disposed off safely and on a daily basis.	Yes	112	94.9
	No	6	5.1

Source: Authors

Table 5. The precautions of educational environment.

Precautions	Yes/no	Frequency	Percentage
Classes are used every day by the same children and the same staff.	Yes	92	78
	No	26	22
Children in different classes must not brought together in common areas and group rooms.	Yes	101	85.6
	No	17	14.4
The classes are ventilated with fresh air by opening doors and windows as much as possible.	Yes	117	99.2
	No	1	0.8
The number of shared toys and materials in the classroom is reduced.	Yes	112	94.9
	No	6	5.1
Hard-to-clean toys (eg. Plush toys, furry toys etc.) are not used.	Yes	76	64.4
	No	42	35.6
Toys that need to be cleaned are separated into a box marked "dirty toys" and kept away from children.	Yes	87	73.7
	No	31	26.3

Source: Authors

Table 6. The precautions of learning process.

Precautions	Yes/no	Frequency	Percentage
Children in different classes must not be brought together in daily learning activities.	Yes	105	89
	No	13	11
Social distance is considered between children both inside and outside.	Yes	114	96.6
	No	4	3.4
During their activities, children are prevented from sitting face to face.	Yes	110	93.2
	No	8	6.8
Children are allowed to go outside to receive fresh air for at least 10 min every hour.	Yes	81	68.6
	No	37	31.4
Outdoor activities are carried out mostly as the weather allows.	Yes	106	89.8
	No	12	10.2
Self-care, personal cleaning, and especially hand hygiene are highlighted as the main themes in their learning activities.	Yes	118	100
	No	0	0
There are no loud activities in the classroom.	Yes	101	85.6
	No	17	14.4

Source: Authors

activities are planned" (Respondent no. 63).

When these expressions of the teachers are examined, it can be seen that some teachers try to include more individual and non-contact activities. In addition, a teacher said, "*Children are made aware of hygiene, Coronavirus and nutrition by using cartoons and images more often" (Respondent no. 65).*

DISCUSSION

According to the findings, it can be seen that various

precautions were considered to keep quality education in every school with the current spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey during the "new normal" named by Fler (2021: 3) as an expression of invitation of COVID-19. Within this new normal process, many countries brought out their own policy documents and instructions that provided pathways for new normal applications in formal school settings (CHED, 2020; DepEd, 2020; Greenstone and Nigam, 2020; Karalis, 2020; Thunstrom et al., 2020). In light of these documents, these countries returned to school. In Turkey, there are numerous documents put out by Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Family, Labour and

their infection prevention and control action plan considering the Turkish policy documents. During the new normal in Turkey, actions determined as adaptation Social Services. The teachers in this study declared that almost all of them were informed of these Turkish policy documents and many of the schools in this study formed of new normal that measured children's fever, tracked whether children, teachers and parents had COVID-19 symptoms, used hand disinfections in the entrance of schools, never accepted visitors from outside, utilised reminder visuals about physical distance, hygiene and face masks. The relevance literature indicates the other countries also have similar applications in their policy sources to maintain health safety and life security of children and teachers (Xue et al., 2021; EYFS: Coronavirus Disapplications, 2021; Early Childhood Australia, 2020). In Australian early years" education settings, strict hygiene precautions were taken such as washing hands at least 20 seconds, using alcohol-based hand disinfections, and keeping minimum parents at the end of school day to sustain physical distance and minimum interactions (Early Childhood Australia, 2020). Hungarian Government also preferred to apply the instructions with less people in school; it means only students and workers in early years" settings were involved to avoid interpersonal interaction. Additionally, in Hungarian, the body temperature of children and workers were measured and recorded, adults wore face masks and installed many hand disinfection boxes indoors and taught children how to use them correctly (Visnjic-Jetic et al., 2021). Moreover, England Government created serious policy documents for pandemic challenge. The policy document of England stated that the number of staff should be reduced, at least one person who has paediatric aid certificate must be in school with children, care should be taken about physical distance indoor, and to ban visitors even parents from outside (EYFS: Coronavirus Disapplications, 2021). Turkey and other countries in England have similar precautions such as measuring and recording children's temperature and wearing personal protective equipment (masks) in necessary situations outside (EYFS: Coronavirus Disapplications, 2021). Japan also took rigorous precautions such as re-arrangements of seating in classrooms, ventilations of indoors frequently, using face masks, washing hands carefully, and controlling of body temperatures (Park et al., 2020). Likewise, strict rules about infection were applied in China's early years" settings (Park et al., 2020). It is found in this study surfaces were cleaned and disinfected with sodium carbonate, surfaces frequently touched daily were disinfected, children's personal items were kept in separate cupboard, indoors were ventilated after every cleansing and littering daily. In the same way, Australian early years services were able to operate by cleaning

surfaces such as doors, chairs, light switches at least once a day (Early Childhood Australia, 2020). What is more, England and Japan also operated in a similar way to clean surfaces; England used liquid detergents indoors every day (EYFS: Coronavirus Disapplications, 2021; Park et al., 2020). Another important finding in this research is that almost all pre-schools cancelled food services. However, other countries strictly took precautions with food safety. For instance, Australia early years" services needed food safety certificate and food services precautions were in the policy document (Early Childhood Australia, 2020). Another example from Hungary about food safety during the pandemic is that the staff prepared cold food packs for children on a weekly basis programme (Visnjic-Jetic et al., 2021).

The research discovered that children from different classrooms were kept in common areas, classrooms were ventilated by opening doors and windows, number of toys was reduced such as plush and furry toys, hard to clean toys were removed, and dirty toys were separated from children. In a similar way but more comprehensively, England's related policy document recommended a cautious approach for hygiene such as to ventilate indoors regularly, reduce the number of common used toys, being careful using easy-clean materials and toys and decrease the number of children for comfortable physical distance (EYFS: Coronavirus Disapplications, 2021). In Australian early years settings, it is paid attention to wash toys and play materials (Early Childhood Australia, 2020). However, in Croatia early years" settings, the items that children use in their play are disinfectable, so, natural, furry and plush toys are forbidden in classrooms (Visnjic-Jetic et al., 2021). This study revealed the parts of the learning process considered in the early years" settings. The policy documents recommended that teachers should keep physical distance in classrooms. For instance, daily learning activities should be organised class by class and there should be no combined classrooms. If weather condition is suitable, outdoors daily learning activities can be planned frequently. Again, in similar way, English related policy document advised that teachers must be careful about children's physical distance in learning centres or areas in their daily activities (EYFS: Coronavirus Disapplications, 2021). China is another country is similar point related to outdoor activities; the related policy documents supported children's indoor free and group play shift to outdoor play (Park et al., 2020).

Even though other countries developed their own policy documents about the integration of COVID-19, there is lack of research on educators" perspective on the extent at which the documents" indicators were applied. This point makes this research unique. Another different and unique point detected is the use of language is banned as well as negative language instead of "encouraging

language For instance, "Children in different classes must not be brought together in common areas and group rooms" could be replaced with another rhetoric which motivates workers such as: "Children from different classes should be kept separated in common areas or group rooms". There are similar examples such as instead of "Mostly silent activities used in indoor activities"; the preferred expression is "There are no loud activities in the classroom". As Hewison and Morrell (2013) discussed in their study that rhetorical devices in policy texts are a vehicle used to create an impression on actions and innovations, and they appeal to people's emotions (O'Neill, 1998). In this study, no teacher commented on this point; however it would be useful to use inspiring and positive language in related policy documents to get more benefit from them.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the world to bring new normal, and this brought new arrangements in policy documents. During the pandemic, first, schools were closed all over the world, and then actions were developed to start face-to-face education by the governments' related offices. Early years' sector was affected negatively during this process. This study shed light on Turkish policy perspective on what the conditions are in early years' settings to challenge COVID-19 in the context of school settings. The main focuses of this study were policy interventions, the implementations of policy documents, and teachers' experiences of these policy documents in early years. In this study, not only Turkish Ministry of Education's policy document was evaluated but also the policy documents from different ministries were considered as they also aim at teachers providing hygienic and healthy classroom in the new normal process. This study also puts a lens on what other countries apply during the COVID-19 and their implications and compared at some points to develop quality understanding about the new normal process. There are some limitations in this study. This study filtered the related documents from the perspective of early years' settings especially health safety in physical environment; however, there are no in-depth investigations across the other educational levels or hybrid learning process. Moreover, there is lack of research on implications of COVID-19 policy documents developed by the other countries' government. For future research, what kind of challenge will Turkish early years' education survive can be explored from the perspective of children and parents on how learning activities and teachers' practices affected the impact of the COVID-19 in schools and how these issues are supported in the related upgraded policy documents during the new normal.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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