

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluation of Social Studies Teachers' Distance Education Experiences During the Covid-19 Pandemic*

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ABSTRACT

Distance education can be defined as a continuing educational process through communication via technology, despite students and teachers being in different physical locations. In Türkiye, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational activities were carried out through distance education methods. This study explores social studies teachers' experiences regarding distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative research approach, phenomenological design, is used in this research. The study group consisted of 12 social studies teachers. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Content analysis was employed to examine the gathered data. The findings show that teachers were able to define the concepts of the pandemic and distance education accurately. It was also seen that while there was an increase in teachers' use of technology during COVID-19, they faced challenges in adapting to distance education. As a result, it was observed that their professional satisfaction was negatively affected. Additionally, teachers expressed that they were unable to teach social studies courses at the desired level through distance education during the pandemic. Furthermore, teachers encountered a variety of challenges during this time, including issues related to computer and internet access, the Directorates of National Education, school administrations, colleagues, students and their parents, teaching methods, assessment, and evaluation practices. Based on the research findings, handbooks for teachers on appropriate methods and techniques for distance education can be prepared. The development of teaching programs suitable for the model can also be suggested.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in Wuhan city in China's Hubei Province, affected the whole world in a short time. This process has also caused humanity to encounter new concepts and practices. One of these concepts is pandemic, and the other is distance education. The pandemic is an infection that affects the whole world and spreads rapidly (Turkish Academy of Sciences, 2020). The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). After the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 pandemic, countries had

to stop face-to-face education activities to prevent the spread of the epidemic. Thus, the whole world became acquainted with the distance education model. One day after March 11, 2020, when the first COVID-19 case was detected in our country, it was decided to close all schools. On March 16, 2020, it was announced that face-to-face education would be suspended, and distance education would be switched (Ministry of National Education, 2020).

Distance education can be defined as students and teachers in different places continuing their education and training by communicating via the Internet, video conference, e-mail, and

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other communication tools (Turkish Language Association, 2020). Before the pandemic, distance education was used in our country to teach standard courses in open education faculties or undergraduate/associate degree programs (Turan & Çolakoğlu, 2008). As the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the world, countries worldwide, including Turkey, had to move education and training to emergency distance education at all levels (Bozkurt, 2020). With the COVID-19 pandemic, distance education has become necessary for the world. Teachers, students, and parents had to adapt quickly to distance education in this process. During this period, the distance education model was considered an essential solution for students to continue their education (Turan & Karasu Avcı, 2022). However, distance education is not a model that can only be used in emergencies. The distance education model can also be used within the scope of lifelong learning (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

It is seen that many of the teachers and students in our country encountered distance education for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers must adapt to this process for the learning and teaching process to be carried out effectively and for meaningful learning experiences to emerge. This research examines social studies teachers' distance education experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected social studies teachers. During this period, teachers faced technical difficulties, struggled to reach students due to insufficient communication, and were unable to utilize the methods and techniques they used in face-to-face teaching. Therefore, it can be said that social studies teachers did not experience an effective teaching and learning process (Karabudak, 2020; Kılıç & Beldağ, 2021; Turan & Karasu Avcı, 2022).

In the relevant literature, it is seen that there are various studies on distance education such as (Ağaoğlu, 2020; Aldemir, 2020; Aras, 2019; Balaman, 2015; Baki, 2016; Begimbetova, 2015; Bozkurt, 2019; Bulutlu, 2018; Çengel, 2014; Demirci, 2018; Demirtaş, 2020; Deveci, 2019; Erfidan, 2019; Gürkan, 2017; Kaya, 2020; Koloğlu, 2016; Mercan, 2018; Özcan, 2019; Sığın, 2020; Sinecen, 2019; Üstün, 2020; Yavuz, 2016; Yeşilfidan, 2019). However, it can be said that these studies are concentrated mainly at the university level. It discussed the opinions of first-grade teachers about distance education at the primary school level (Karabudak, 2020; Karabudak & Karasu Avcı, 2025). At the secondary school level (Akça, 2020; Akça, 2022; Uyar, 2020; Yeşilyurt, 2021), they determined the opinions of social studies teachers regarding distance education. In addition, studies have examined student and teacher opinions regarding distance education at the secondary school level (Akgül & Oran, 2020; Korkut & Memişoğlu, 2021). In this context, it can be said that there is a limited

number of studies examining the opinions of social studies teachers regarding distance education. The key feature that distinguishes this research from previous studies is its multi-dimensional approach to the unique remote education experiences of social studies teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are many studies on remote education in the literature, most of them focus on the opinions of university students or general teachers. Research focusing on social studies teachers at the middle school level is quite limited. This study analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of social studies teachers' pedagogical, technological, and affective experiences during the pandemic in a holistic way by presenting their own accounts. Thus, it offers a unique contribution to the literature by examining both the challenges specific to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject and the reflections of extraordinary circumstances on teaching processes. This research examines social studies teachers' distance education experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the problem statement of the research is "What are the distance education experiences of social studies teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic?" It was determined as.

2. Method

The study protocol was approved by Kastamonu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee on 25.03.2021 (Decision no: 87).

2.1. Model of the Research

In the model of the research, the qualitative research model was preferred. Qualitative research is a type of research in which data is collected through methods such as observation and interview (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The qualitative research model was preferred because the opinions of social studies teachers were used in the research. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research models, was used. Phenomenology is a research model in which participants' personal experiences regarding phenomena are examined in depth (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). This model was used in the research because teachers' opinions about distance education were discussed in line with their personal experiences.

2.2. Study Group

The study group of the research consisted of 12 social studies teachers working in secondary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Kastamonu City Center. Convenience sampling type was used in the research. Appropriate sampling is the type of sampling through which the researcher can reach their goal most easily and quickly (Creswell, 2014). The study used appropriate sampling to access the data more rapidly and efficiently.

Table 1. Information on demographic characteristics of social studies teachers.

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	8	66.6
Female	4	33.3
Age		
25-30 years old	2	16.6
31-35 years old	6	50
36-40 years old	3	25
41-45 years old	1	8.3
Years of Service		
1-5 years	4	33.3
6-10 years	5	41.6
11-15 years	1	8.3
16-20 years	2	16.6
Have you attended any in-service training programs on distance education?		
Yes	3	25
No	9	75
Do you have an active internet connection at your home?		
Yes	12	100
No		
Do you have a personal computer?		
Yes	10	83.3
No	2	16.6

When the table is examined, 8 (66%) teachers are male, and 4 (33.3%) are female. The length of service of teachers, whose ages vary between 25 and 45, varies between 1 and 20 years. While 3 (25%) of the teachers received in-service training on distance education, 9 (75%) did not receive in-service training. All teachers have Internet at home. While 10 (83.3%) of the teachers have a personal computer, 2 (16.6%) do not have a personal computer.

2.3. Data Collection Process

Data collection in the study started with the approval of the ethics committee and the permission of the Directorate of National Education. Some of the teachers were interviewed face to face, and some were contacted by phone, and an appointment was requested to fill out the semi-structured interview form. Then, they were asked to fill out the semi-structured interview form using WhatsApp or email. It was stated that the data obtained in the research would be used in a scientific study, and personal information would not be used with anyone.

2.4. Data Collection Tool

To collect data for the study, the researchers prepared a semi-structured interview form. This form is an interview technique that allows participants to express their thoughts freely (Patton, 2018). This research used this data collection

tool because teachers' opinions about the distance education process were discussed. Before preparing the questions within the scope of the study, the relevant literature was scanned, and the questions were prepared accordingly. After the questions were prepared, they were presented to the evaluation of four social studies education experts, one assessment expert, and one grammar expert. Necessary corrections were made in line with the feedback received from experts, and then the pilot implementation phase began. Initially, researchers prepared 15 questions. With expert input, similar questions were combined into a single item, reducing the number of questions to 12. The pilot application was made to three social studies teachers. As a result of the application, corrections were made to some questions. Following the pilot program, the way question 1 was formulated was reviewed and revised. No changes were made to the interview format. Teachers who participated in the pilot application were excluded from the research process. The research questions are given below:

1. What does the pandemic mean to you?
2. What does distance education mean to you?
3. Has the distance education process affected your use of educational technologies? If so, how did it affect you?
4. Did the distance education process affect your professional satisfaction? If so, how did it affect you?

5. What do you think about secondary school students' adaptation to distance education?
6. What methods and techniques do you use in the social studies course during distance education? What are your reasons for choosing these methods and techniques?
7. What materials do you use in the social studies course during distance education? From where?
8. What are your opinions about teaching the subjects in the social studies course during the distance education process?
9. What assessment and evaluation tools did you use in the social studies course during the distance education process? From where?
10. What are the problems you experienced in the social studies course during the distance education process?
11. Do you find distance education or face-to-face education more efficient? From where?
12. What are your suggestions to make the social studies course more productive during distance education?

2.5. Analysis of Data

The content analysis method was used to analyze the data obtained in the research. Content analysis is the process of organizing, classifying, and comparing the data received and reaching theoretical conclusions (Cohen et al., 2007). Before the data were analyzed, the interview forms were coded as (T-1, T-2, ... T-10). After coding, the answers to each question were read one by one and conceptualized. Then, these concepts were arranged, and categories were created.

2.6. Reliability and Validity of the Research

Reliability and validity are two fundamental dimensions that enhance the robustness of scientific research. Reliability means that the data obtained can be interpreted similarly by other researchers (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Accordingly, in this study, an additional analysis was conducted by an independent researcher to ensure the reliability of the data, and disagreements among researchers were discussed and resolved into a common decision. This practice is described in the literature as analyst triangulation and corresponds to the process of comparing results by analyzing the same data by multiple researchers (Patton, 2014). In qualitative research, validity refers to presenting the research process as objectively and transparently as possible (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this research, validity was strengthened by explaining all stages in detail and supporting the findings with participant statements. In the analysis of qualitative data, the Miles and Huberman (1994) reliability formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}}$) was used. In this context, the data was found to be reliable at a rate of $72/72+12=0,85$.

3. Findings

In the study, teachers were asked what the pandemic meant to them. Teachers' opinions on this question are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' opinions about the pandemic.

Categories	f
The epidemic that affected the whole World	10
Complexity	1
Uncertainty	1
Quarantine	1
Global health problem	1
Suspension of many activities in the country	1
TOTAL	15

Teachers described the pandemic as “the epidemic that affected the whole world” (f=10). This category was divided into “complexity” (f=1), “uncertainty” (f=1), “quarantine” (f=1), “worldwide health problem” (f=1), and “suspension of many activities in the country” (f=1), followed by the categories. Accordingly, it is understood that their teachers are knowledgeable about the pandemic. Teachers' opinions regarding this question are given below:

Sample comment for the category “The epidemic that affected the whole World”:

T-1: “An epidemic that starts in a certain region and affects the whole world, and causes negative consequences in many areas.”

Sample comment for the category “Uncertainty”:

T-2: “Epidemic, chaos, uncertainty.”

Sample comment for the category “Worldwide health problem”:

T-3: “Global health problem.”

Sample comment for the category “Suspension of many activities in the country”

T-4: “Long-term epidemic spreading over a wide area.”

Based on these views, it is understood that teachers define COVID-19 as a significant global health problem and believe it affects human lives.

In the research, teachers were asked what distance education meant to them. Teachers' opinions regarding this question are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers' opinions about distance education.

Categories	f
Online Education	5
An alternative method is used when face-to-face education cannot be applied	2
Training during the pandemic period	2
Education under any circumstances and at any time	1
It is better than nothing	1
Education without direct interaction with students	1
TOTAL	12

Teachers mainly express the concept of distance education as "online education" (f=5). This category is divided into "alternative method used when face-to-face education cannot be applied" (f=2), "Training during the pandemic period" (f=2), "education under any circumstances and at any time" (f=1), "it is better than nothing" (f=1) and "education without direct interaction with students" (f=1) categories were followed. Accordingly, teachers are knowledgeable about distance education. Teacher opinions regarding the research question are given below:

Sample comment for the category "Online education":

T-6: "It is a precaution to prevent educational activities from being disrupted when human health is in danger."

Sample comment for the category "Alternative method used when face-to-face education cannot be applied":

T-7: "Education is education carried out in an internet-based classroom environment."

Sample comment for the category "Training during the pandemic period":

T-11: "Continuing education via video over the internet in cases where it is impossible to go to school."

Sample comment for the category "Education under any circumstances and at any time":

T-12: "Providing education through mass media (television, computer, etc.) in extraordinary situations."

It is understood from this research question that teachers view distance education as an alternative method, internet-based education, and education utilized in extraordinary circumstances.

Within the scope of the research, teachers were asked whether the distance education process affected the use of educational technologies and, if so, how teachers' opinions on this question are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers' opinions on how the distance education process affects their use of technology.

Categories	f
Learning online tools and apps	8
Having knowledge about Information Technologies	2
Positively affected	1
Negatively affected	1
TOTAL	12

Teachers think that the category of "learning online tools and applications" (f=8) affects their technology use the most. This category was followed by the categories "knowing information technologies" (f=2), "positively affected" (f=1), and "negatively affected" (f=1). Accordingly, it is understood that the participants are trying to improve themselves regarding technology use during the distance education process. Teachers' opinions within the scope of the research question are given below:

Sample comment for the category "Learning online tools and apps":

T-1: "It showed that we need to know more about information technologies and software and that we need to use them actively during the education process."

Sample comment for the category "Learning online tools and apps":

T-7: "Of course it affected me. Our country had no experience in distance education. We had this experience during the epidemic. I learned how to use various programs in the educational environment."

Sample comment for the category "Learning online tools and apps":

T-8: "It affected me. We installed and used programs we had not used before. We discovered and used features that we had not used in computers."

Sample comment for the category "Positively affected":

T-10: "Yes, it affected me. My computer usage rate has increased."

The teachers' responses indicate that they were affected by the distance learning process, particularly noting that they improved their technological skills and learned new things.

In the research, teachers were asked whether the distance education process affected their professional satisfaction and, if so, how it affected them. Teachers' opinions on this question are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Teachers' opinions on the impact of the distance education process on their professional satisfaction.

Categories	Code	f
Affected	Negatively affected	8
Did not affect	It was inferior to face-to-face education	1
TOTAL		9

It is seen that the opinions of the teachers are collected under the categories of “affected” (f=8) and “did not affect” (f=1). Teachers who thought the distance education process affected their professional satisfaction expressed their opinion as “negatively impacted” (f=8). In contrast, the teacher who believed the distance education process did not affect their professional satisfaction expressed their opinion: “It was inferior to face-to-face education” (f=1). Accordingly, it is seen that the distance education process negatively affects teachers' professional satisfaction. Within the scope of this research question, teachers' opinions are as follows:

Sample comment for the category “Did not affect”:

T-1: “Although distance education has useful parts, I think it is insufficient to provide the professional satisfaction of face-to-face education.”

Sample comment for the category “Did not affect”:

T-2: “Not being able to reach all students and not receiving effective feedback from the students reached had a negative impact on our professional satisfaction.”

Sample comment for the category “Did not affect”:

T-5: “As the distance education process got longer, professional fatigue and reluctance began.”

Sample comment for the category “Did not affect”:

T-7: “It affected student participation in distance education, which was not at the desired level. Student mastery was very low compared to face-to-face education. Therefore, it had a negative impact.”

Teachers who believe that distance learning has not affected them state that distance learning is not a substitute for face-to-face education, that effective communication with students is not possible, and that it increases professional fatigue and lack of motivation.

Teachers were asked what they thought about secondary school students' adaptation to distance education. Teachers' opinions regarding this question are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Opinions of students on their adaptation to the distance education process, according to teachers.

Categories	f
Students were negatively affected	6
The age group was not suitable for distance education	2
While students with high self-discipline adapted, students with low self-discipline had difficulty adapting	1
Equality of opportunity could not be achieved due to internet access	1
Had difficulty focusing	1
Reluctance and a tendency to get bored quickly were observed	1
TOTAL	12

Teachers mostly expressed their opinions regarding students' adaptation to distance education as “students were negatively affected” (f=6). This category was divided into “the age group was not suitable for distance education” (f=2), “while students with high self-discipline adapted, students with low self-discipline had difficulty adapting” (f=1), “equality of opportunity could not be achieved due to internet access” (f=1), “had difficulty focusing” (f=1) and “reluctance and a tendency to get bored quickly were observed” (f=1). Accordingly, teachers think students have difficulty adapting to distance education. Teachers' opinions regarding this question of the research are given below:

Sample comment for the category “Equality of opportunity could not be achieved due to internet Access”:

T-3: “It was not easy. Since there is no internet everywhere in our country, our students could not benefit from equal educational opportunities.”

Sample comment for the category “Had difficulty focusing”:

T-8: “They had a hard time, it was difficult for them to focus on the technological device for a long time outside of the game.”

Sample comment for the category “While students with high self-discipline adapted, students with low self-discipline had difficulty adapting”:

T-11: “Even if it adapts, its effectiveness is less than face-to-face education.”

Sample comment for the category “Had difficulty focusing”:

T-12: “It would be correct to say he is more successful than primary school students. But it wasn't completely productive.”

Teachers generally believe that students are struggling to adapt to this process. They state that distance learning is not

sufficiently effective due to problems such as students not having internet access at home and difficulty focusing.

Teachers were asked which methods and techniques they used in the social studies course during the distance education process and why they preferred these methods and techniques. Teachers' opinions on this question are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Opinions of teachers about the methods and techniques they prefer in the distance education process.

Categories	f
Teaching through presentation	9
Computer-based instruction	4
Argument	3
Question and answer	3
Game	1
Teaching through discovery	1
Problem solving	1
Case study	1
TOTAL	23

It was determined that teachers mostly used the "teaching through presentation" method (f=9) during the distance education process. This category was divided into "computer-based teaching" (f=4), "argument" (f=3), "question-answer" (f=3), "game" (f=1), "teaching through discovery" (f=1), "case study" (f=1) and "problem solving" (f=1) categories. In this regard, it is seen that teachers benefit from different methods and techniques in the distance education process.

Table 8. Teachers' opinions on the reasons for choosing the methods and techniques they use in the distance education process.

Categories	f
Appropriateness to the course and subject	3
Involving students in the learning process	2
Making the lesson enjoyable	2
Providing easy access to materials	1
TOTAL	8

Teachers mostly answered why these methods and techniques were chosen as "appropriateness to the course and subject" (f=3). This category was followed by the categories of "involving students in the learning process" (f=2), "making the lesson enjoyable" (f=2), and "providing easy access to materials" (f=1). In this regard, it can be said that teachers use these methods and techniques because they are more suitable for the lesson and the subject. Teacher opinions regarding this question in the research are given below:

Sample comment for the category "Involving students in the learning process":

T-5: "Question and answer, discussion, brainstorming, explanation, illustration. I generally used these methods to make the student active and participate in the lesson."

Sample comment for the category "Appropriateness to the course and subject":

T-9: "Presentation, question, and answer method because this is the most appropriate method and technique in this process."

Sample comment for the category "Appropriateness to the course and subject":

T-10: "Lectures, maps, and slides. Because other methods and techniques are not very suitable for online education."

It appears that teachers have utilized various methods and techniques in the distance education process. These methods and techniques are preferred for reasons such as engaging students in the process and suitability for the subject matter.

Teachers were asked what materials they used in the social studies course during the distance education process and why they made these choices. Teachers' opinions on this question are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9. Teachers' opinions about the materials they prefer during the distance education process.

Categories	f
Slide	7
Video	4
Map	2
Textbook	2
Computer	2
Telephone	2
Three-dimensional software	1
Z boks	1
Worksheet	1
Zoom	1
EIN	1
TOTAL	24

Teachers said they primarily used "slides" (f=7) as material in the distance education process. We divided this category into "video" (f=4), "map" (f=2), "textbook" (f=2), "computer" (f=2), "telephone" (f=2). The categories are "three-dimensional software" (f=1), "z books" (f=1), "working papers" (f=1), "Zoom" (f=1), and "EIN" (f=1). Accordingly, teachers benefit from different materials in this process.

Table 10. Teachers' opinions on the reasons for choosing the materials they use in the distance education process.

Categories	f
Grab students' attention	1
Simplifying the narrative	1
Ensuring that the information learned is permanent	1
TOTAL	3

The reasons why teachers prefer materials are “grab students' attention” (f=1), “simplifying the narrative” (f=1), and “ensuring that the information learned is permanent” (f=1). However, most teachers (f=9) did not state their reasons for choosing the materials they used in the distance education process. Teachers' opinions regarding this question of the research are given below:

Sample comment for the category “Grab students' attention”:

T-5: “I mostly used slides, videos, websites, and visuals. I took care to use materials that would attract students' attention.”

Sample comment for the category “Simplifying the narrative”:

S-10: “Textbooks, maps. To make it easier to explain.”

Teachers have been observed to utilize various materials during the distance learning process. It appears they primarily use these materials to attract students' attention and simplify the explanations.

Teachers were asked about their thoughts on teaching the subjects of the social studies course during the distance education process. Teachers' opinions on this issue are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Opinions of teachers about teaching subjects in the distance education process.

Categories	f
The expected level of teaching the subjects could not be reached	8
There were no problems	3
TOTAL	11

It is seen that teachers' opinions regarding the teaching of social studies course subjects during the distance education process are collected under the categories of “the expected level in teaching the subjects was not reached” (f=8) and “there was no problem” (f=3). In this regard, it can be said that most teachers think they cannot reach the desired level in teaching social studies course subjects related to the distance education process. Teachers' opinions regarding this question of the research are as follows:

Sample comment for the category “The expected level in teaching the subjects could not be reached”:

T-2: “Even if I used activities such as slides, videos, and animations, more systematic and effective solutions could be made.”

Sample comment for the category “There were no problems”:

T-5: “I had no difficulties teaching the subjects because many materials related to the social studies course were accessible.”

Sample comment for the category “The expected level in teaching the subjects could not be reached”:

T-8: “There is no problem in the explanation phase, but the heavy topics caused a decrease in success.”

Sample comment for the category “The expected level in teaching the subjects could not be reached”:

T-10: “Especially students studying for the exam and new fifth-grade students had difficulty understanding the topics.”

Teachers generally state that lessons cannot be delivered at the desired level of effectiveness during the distance learning process.

In the research, teachers were asked which assessment and evaluation tools they used in the social studies course during the distance education process and the reasons for these preferences. Teachers' opinions on this question are presented in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 12. Opinions of social studies teachers about the assessment and evaluation tools they prefer during the distance education process.

Categories	f
Multiple choice	7
Student portfolio	3
Worksheets	2
I did not use an assessment tool	2
Matching	2
Criterion dependent	1
Gain comprehension test	1
Oral	1
Research paper	1
Fishbone	1
TOTAL	21

Teachers stated that they mostly used “multiple choice tests” (f=7) as an assessment and evaluation tool in the distance education process. This category was divided into “student portfolio” (f=3), “worksheets” (f=2), “I did not use an assessment tool” (f=2), “matching” (f=2), “criterion

dependent” (f= 1), “gain comprehension test” (f=1), “oral” (f=1), “research paper” (f=1) and “fishbone” (f=1) categories. In this regard, it can be said that teachers benefit from different assessment and evaluation tools during the distance education process.

Table 13. Teachers’ opinions on the reasons for choosing the assessment and evaluation tools they use in the distance education process.

Categories	f
Suitable for distance education	2
Limited assessment and evaluation options	1
TOTAL	3

The reasons why teachers prefer assessment and evaluation tools are “suitable for distance education” (f=2) and “limited assessment and evaluation options” (f=1), respectively. Many teachers (f = 9) did not explain their reasons for choosing the assessment and evaluation tools they used in this process. Teacher opinions regarding this question of the research are given below:

Sample comment for the category “Suitable for distance education”:

T-5: “I used assessment and evaluation via Google form. I used verbal assessment tools. I also included multiple-choice questions.”

Sample comment for the category “Limited assessment and evaluation opportunities”:

T-12: “I used the student portfolio and various research assignments. There were already many problems in teaching, especially in the first semester. That’s why I resorted to such an evaluation method.”

Teachers have utilized various assessment and evaluation tools during the distance education process. They explain their preference for these tools by stating that they are suitable for distance education.

Teachers were asked about the problems they encountered in the social studies course during the distance education process. Teachers’ opinions regarding this question are included in Table 14.

Table 14. Teachers’ opinions about the problems they encountered in the social studies course during the distance education process.

Categories	Code	f
Problems with the computer (software, hardware, etc.)	I did not encounter any problems	4
	Sound	4
	Microphone	2
	Security vulnerabilities in applications	1
	Programs are of foreign origin	1
	EIN's failure to respond	1
	Zoom is in English	1
	Lack of technological tools among students	1
	Software not suitable for use	1
Internet connection disruptions	I did not encounter any problems	6
	Disconnections and hangs	4
	Students not being able to access the Internet	2
	EIN (Education Information Network) not responding	2
	Electrical fault	1
Problems with school administration	I did not encounter any problems	12
Issues with the Directorate of National Education	I did not encounter any problems	12
Issues with the subject teacher	I did not encounter any problems	11
	Incompatibility in the use of the shared system	1
Problems with the student	Difficulty adapting	5
	Lack of order	4
	Participation is low	3
	Hardware failure	1
	I did not encounter any problems	1
	Inability to access the connection	1
	High noise level at home	1

Table 14. (continued).

Categories	Code	f
Problems with parents	Not getting any feedback	6
	Indifferent parent	5
	I did not encounter any problems	2
Problems with method and technique	I did not encounter any problems	6
	Insufficient method and technique	4
	Failure to carry out events	1
	I did not encounter any problems	6
Problems with assessment and evaluation	I did not encounter any problems	4
	Assessment and evaluation could not be carried out	3
	Limited assessment and evaluation were applied	2
	The process is unclear and constantly changing	1
	I had difficulty until I learned appropriate assessment and evaluation tools	1
	Not providing face-to-face education	1
Other (if any other problems)	I did not encounter any problems	9
	Health-related problem	1
TOTAL		140

The problems experienced by teachers in the social studies course during the distance education process were “problems with the computer (software, hardware, etc.)” (f=16), “Internet Problems with the Directorate of National Education (f=12), “Problems with the subject teacher” (f=16), “Problems with the student” (f=21), “Problems with parents” (f=13), “Problems with method and technique” (f=17), Problems with assessment and evaluation (f=12) and other (if any other problems are experienced) (f=10) divided into categories. When the problems encountered by teachers are examined, it is seen that they mostly experience student-related problems (f=21). This category is followed by problems related to method and technique (f=17), computer problems for students (f=16), and internet connection problems for students (f=15). Teachers’ opinions about the problems they experience are listed below:

Sample comment for the category “Internet connection disruptions”:

T-1: “There are power outages in the village, and there are no students with internet connections in most places.”

Sample comment for the category “Problems with the student”:

T-4: “Indifference.”

Sample comment for the category “Problems with the subject teacher”:

T-5: “I experienced health problems (headache, backache, fatigue, insomnia). As the time spent in front of the computer has increased, these problems have also increased.”

Sample comment for the category “Problems with method and technique”:

T-6: “I could not use many methods and techniques because there was no face-to-face education with the students.”

T-10: “I generally had to use the narrative technique. I had difficulty using other techniques due to a lack of resources.”

T-11: “Inability to use techniques such as modeling and demonstration.”

It appears that teachers' opinions regarding the problems they encountered in social studies lessons during distance education fall under general headings such as internet connection, students, teachers, methods, and techniques.

Teachers were asked to compare distance education and face-to-face education, which one they thought was more efficient, and the reasons for their preferences. Teachers’ opinions on this question are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Teachers’ opinions about the reasons why they find distance education or face-to-face education productive.

Categories	Code	f
Face to face education	Social studies course should be interaction-oriented	6
	More effective and efficient implementation of distance education	5
	Failure to provide equal opportunities in distance education	1
	Inability to observe emotions and behaviors in distance education	1
	Achieving professional satisfaction	1
TOTAL		14

The most common reason teachers find face-to-face education productive is "the social studies course is interaction-oriented" (f=6). This category is divided into "more effective and efficient implementation of distance education" (f=5), "failure to provide equal opportunities in distance education" (f=1), "failure to observe emotions and behaviors in distance education" (f=1) and "achieving professional satisfaction" (f=1) categories are followed. Teachers' opinions regarding this question of the research are given below:

Sample comment for the category "Inability to observe emotions and behaviors in distance education":

T-3: "Face to face. At least we can see the human expressing his actions and emotions."

Sample comment for the category "Social studies course should be interaction-oriented":

T-4: "I find face-to-face education useful. Because social studies is a course that requires mutual interaction."

Sample comment for the category "Social studies course should be interaction-oriented":

T-8: "Face-to-face education is more efficient. I think mutual exchange with the student is at the forefront."

Sample comment for the category "Social studies course should be interaction-oriented":

T-11: "I think face-to-face education is more efficient. I think distance education cannot provide enough interaction."

Teachers differ in their perception of whether remote or in-person teaching is effective. Those who find remote teaching effective cite convenience in terms of time and accessibility; however, they believe that in-person teaching, with its interactive approach, is more effective.

Table 16. Teachers' opinions on increasing the efficiency of social studies courses during distance education.

Categories	f
Improving EIN and similar platforms	4
Preparation of appropriate materials	3
Providing in-service training	2
Animation, video, game, etc., development of content	2
I do not have any suggestions	2
Students are provided with computers, internet access, etc., providing technological opportunities	2
Application of methods and techniques to the needs of students	1
Teachers and students can be involved in the process without time restrictions	1
TOTAL	17

Teachers mostly suggested "improving EIN and similar platforms" (f=4) to make distance education more efficient.

This category is divided into "preparation of appropriate materials" (f=3), "presentation of in-service trainings" (f=2), "animation, video, game, etc. improving the content" (f=2), "I do not have any suggestions" (f=2), "Students are provided with computers, internet access, etc. providing technological opportunities" (f=2), "application of methods and techniques to the needs of students" (f=1) and "involvement of teachers and students in the process without time restrictions" (f=1). Teachers' opinions regarding this question of the research are given below:

Sample comment for the category "Providing in-service training":

T-1: "To be more efficient in the distance education process, more training should be provided through in-service training, and EIN should be used in the social studies course. More interactive materials can be found on the platforms."

Sample comment for the category "Preparation of appropriate materials":

T-4: "Materials suitable for distance education should be developed. Students' lack of Internet and computers should be eliminated."

Sample comment for the category "Improving EIN and similar platforms":

T-9: "The contents on EIN need to be enriched."

Sample comment for the category "Students are provided with computers, internet access, etc., providing technological opportunities":

T-11: "Increasing the internet speed, eliminating infrastructure problems, and producing more content models and applications related to the subjects in the course increase efficiency."

Teachers have expressed opinions on providing in-service training to increase the effectiveness of social studies lessons in distance education, preparing appropriate materials, and improving digital platforms.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The research discussed social studies teachers' experiences with distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study, it was determined that the majority of teachers had the correct definitions of the concept of pandemic. However, some teachers also confuse the concept of pandemic with epidemic diseases. The main reason why some social studies teachers confused the concept of pandemic with epidemic during the COVID-19 period is the differences in health literacy levels and the insufficient coverage of epidemiological terms in educational programs. The literature shows that teachers may have difficulty understanding scientific concepts related to health, and the frequent interchangeability of these terms in the

media and everyday language increases misconceptions (Nutbeam, 2008). In Karabudak (2020)'s study, classroom teachers correctly defined the concept of pandemic. This situation coincides with the findings of this research. Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020) revealed in their study that science teachers confused the concept of pandemic with epidemic diseases and viruses. This result also supports the result obtained from this research.

In the research, teachers also defined the concept of distance education correctly. However, some teachers think distance education is only carried out during extraordinary periods, such as the pandemic. However, the distance education model can be applied under normal conditions (Altun, 2020).

The findings of the study suggest that teachers described a noticeable increase in their use of technology during the COVID-19 distance education period. Similarly, Akça (2020) reported that social studies teachers recounted greater engagement with technological tools throughout the process. In this respect, both studies highlight comparable experiences regarding teachers' expanded reliance on technology in distance education. In addition, Karabudak (2020) found in his research that classroom teachers' computer use increased during the distance education process, teachers tried to learn new programs, and spent more time on the Internet. In their study, Mulenga and Marban (2020) found that teachers had to use more technology during the distance education process. All these results obtained from the literature support this conclusion of the research. Accordingly, it can be said that teachers' use of technology increased during the pandemic period.

The findings of the study indicate that distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic adversely influenced social studies teachers' sense of professional fulfillment. Teachers' descriptions of feeling inadequate and undervalued in the distance education environment, as reported in Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020)'s study, similarly illustrate how the process weakened their professional well-being. Parallel interpretations were also noted in the studies of Akça (2020) and Karabudak (2020), where teachers expressed that the demands and constraints of distance education diminished their motivation and reduced the sense of meaning they derived from their work. These converging accounts show that, across studies, teachers experienced distance education as a process that strained their professional identities and reduced their overall sense of professional fulfillment during the pandemic.

Teachers stated that students had difficulty adapting to distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the study of Akgül and Oran (2020), low motivation in students results in getting bored easily, staying away from the social environment, etc. It has been determined that these situations cause students difficulty adapting to distance education. In his study, Akça (2022) concluded that students

experienced a lack of motivation in the distance education process and did not get much efficiency from this process. The results of these studies in the literature are similar to those of this research. In this regard, according to the teachers' opinions, it can be said that the students have difficulty adapting to the distance education process.

The analysis of the qualitative data indicates that social studies teachers relied predominantly on the "presentation/explanation" and "computer-assisted teaching" methods during the COVID-19 distance education period. This finding differs from Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020)'s study, which revealed that science teachers tended to use "question-answer," "problem solving," and "explanation" methods. This divergence can be attributed to the differences in subject area characteristics. Consistent with the present research, Akça (2020) also found that social studies teachers most frequently employed the "presentation/expression" method in distance education. These findings collectively suggest that the presentation/explanation method was the primary instructional approach used by social studies teachers during the pandemic.

The study also shows that social studies teachers made extensive use of slides, videos, and maps as instructional materials throughout the distance education process. This result is supported by Bakioğlu and Çevik (2020), who reported similar material use among teachers, as well as by the study of Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020), which found that teachers abroad also relied on comparable digital materials. Taken together, these studies demonstrate that the distance education context tended to channel teachers toward similar material choices.

Participants further reported that they were unable to achieve the desired level of success in teaching social studies content through distance education. This perception aligns with the findings of Aydemir (2021), Ceylan and Çoban (2021), and Elçi and Tünkler (2022), all of whom concluded that social studies learning outcomes were not sufficiently achieved. Similarly, Akça (2020) found that distance education was generally inefficient for students. These converging findings indicate that effective instructional outcomes in social studies were difficult to attain during the pandemic period.

Findings also show that teachers used a range of assessment and evaluation tools during distance education. Most teachers reported using multiple-choice tests, a result consistent with those of Ceylan and Çoban (2021) and Elçi and Tünkler (2022). In addition, teachers assessed verbal skills, class participation, and research assignments, noting that these forms of assessment were more compatible with distance education conditions.

The research reveals that social studies teachers encountered various challenges during the distance education process, including computer-related issues (software, hardware), internet connection problems, difficulties with

school administration and the Directorate of National Education, classroom group dynamics, student engagement, parental involvement, teaching methods, and assessment and evaluation practices. Computer-related difficulties reported in this study parallel the findings of Akça (2020), Ceylan and Çoban (2021), Elçi and Tünkler (2022) and Karabudak (2020). Frequent internet disconnections and freezing problems, as identified in the present study, also mirror the results of Akgül and Oran (2020), Doğan and Temir (2022), and Kılıç and Reçepoğlu (2022). While some studies (Akça, 2020; e.g., Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Karabudak, 2020) reported that teachers did not face significant issues with school administration or educational authorities, this research found that problems in these areas were present. Moreover, similar to findings reported by Akça (2020), Akgül and Oran (2020), Doğan and Temir (2022) and Karabudak (2020), the teachers emphasized parental indifference as a major obstacle. Studies by Korkut and Memişoğlu (2021) and Sığın (2020) also support the conclusion that teaching methods commonly used in face-to-face instruction could not be fully implemented in the distance education environment. Consistent with the present study, research by Balaman and Hanbay Tiryaki (2021), Kılıç and Beldağ (2021) and Özdoğan and Berkant (2020) shows that assessment and evaluation practices were insufficient during the pandemic. Overall, the literature indicates that the challenges encountered by teachers during COVID-19 were largely similar across studies.

Teachers in this study stated that face-to-face education was more efficient than distance education. This finding is supported by the results of Akça (2020), Alkan (2023), Doğan and Temir (2022), Karabudak (2020), Karabudak and Karasu Avcı (2025), Kılıç and Beldağ (2021), Korkut and Memişoğlu (2021), and Özdoğan and Berkant (2020), all of whom concluded that face-to-face instruction yields higher levels of educational effectiveness. These results strengthen the conclusion that distance education was less efficient for social studies teaching during the pandemic.

Finally, teachers recommended several strategies for making social studies instruction more effective through distance education, such as improving platforms like EIN (EBA), developing suitable instructional materials, providing in-service training for teachers, and enriching content with animations, videos, and games. These recommendations correspond with those offered by Akça (2020) and Karabudak (2020), who similarly suggested enhancing distance education platforms, designing appropriate digital materials, and increasing teacher training opportunities. These parallels indicate strong alignment between the findings of the present study and the broader literature.

In line with the results of the study, the following suggestions can be put forward:

- Handbooks supported by introductory and examples can be prepared for teachers regarding methods and techniques suitable for distance education.
- Teachers can be given in-service training to introduce the distance education model.
- Curriculum programs suitable for the distance education model can be prepared.
- The content of the EIN platform can be developed and enriched to be suitable for distance education.
- Free Internet, computers, tablets, etc. for teachers. Hardware support that they can use in distance education can be provided.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study protocol was approved by Kastamonu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee on 25.03.2021 (Decision no: 87).

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Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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