

COVID-19 PANDEMİ SÜRECİNDE EV İZOLASYONUNDA TÜRK ADOLESANLARIN RUH HALİ

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı yeni tip korona virüsün salgının neden olduğu ev hapsinin ergenler üzerindeki etkisini belirlemektir. Bu çalışma nitel tanımlayıcı yöntemle Nisan-Haziran 2020 tarihleri arasında Türkiye’de yapıldı. Katılımcılar lisede eğitim gören ve yaşları 14-17 arasında değişen ergenlerdir (n=40). Araştırmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veriler elektronik posta yoluyla gönderilen açık uçlu sorular aracılığı ile toplandı. Veri toplama için araştırmacılar üç açık uçlu soru hazırladılar. Bunlar: Koronavirüs salgını ilk duyduğunuzda ne düşündüğünüzü ve hissettiğinizi açıklayabilir misiniz?; Koronavirüs salgını okul hayatınızı nasıl etkiledi?; Koronavirüs salgını sürecinde evde kalmak sizi nasıl etkiledi? Açıklayabilir misin? Yapılan içerik analizinde çalışmanın ana temaları; (1) korku (korona virüs bulaşma/bulaştırma korkusu, ölüm korkusu), (2) eğitim sürecinde bozulma (online derslerden verim alamama, tatil havasına girme), (3) evde kalmaya bağlı gelişen sorunlar (ruhsal sorunlar, sosyal medya kullanımında artma, aktivitede azalma), (4) aile ilişkileri (aile içi ilişkilerde artma, aile üyeleri ile çatışma), (5) özlem (okul ve arkadaşlarına özlem, corona pandemisi öncesi günlere özlem) olarak belirlendi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19 pandemisi, ev izolasyonu, ergen ruh hali

MOODS OF TURKISH ADOLESCENTS IN HOME ISOLATION DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC PROCESS

Abstract

To find out the effects of home confinement caused by novel coronavirus outbreak on adolescents. This study was conducted in Turkey between April and June 2020 with qualitative descriptive method. The participants are 40 adolescents who were studying at high school with ages ranging between 14 and 17. Purposive sampling method was used in the study. The data were collected through open-ended questions sent through e-mail. For data collection, the researchers prepared three open-ended questions. These were: Can you explain what you thought and felt when you heard about coronavirus outbreak for the first time?; How did coronavirus outbreak affect your school life?; How did staying at home affect you during Coronavirus outbreak? Can you explain? In the content analysis conducted, the main themes of the study were determined as (1) fear (fear of being transmitted with/transmitting coronavirus, fear of death), (2) deterioration in the education process (not being able to get efficiency from online lessons, getting into a holiday mood), (3) problems due to staying at home (mental problems, increase in social media use, decreased activity, (4) family relationships (increase in family relationships, conflict with family members), (5) longing (longing for school and friends, longing for pre-corona pandemic days).

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, home isolation, adolescent mood

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) first appeared in Hubei Province of China and affected the whole world, causing a pandemic. World Health Organization (WHO) officially defined the novel coronavirus disease as “Covid-19” on February 11, 2020 (1). COVID-19 pandemic caused a large number of people in the world to catch the disease and some of these people to lose their lives (2,3). Countries tried to protect the health of their people with measures such as the ban on leaving home and traveling, shutting down schools, social distance and hygiene to protect from the outbreak (1-4). In Turkey, schools were shut down for a week for primary education and high school and for 3 weeks for university on March 16, 2020 (5). All citizens were advised not to go out except for meeting their compulsory needs and a ban was imposed on some days (6). As of March 23, 2020, the Ministry of National Education announced that education would continue as distance education and spring semester classes were completed with distance education method (5,6).

A curfew was imposed on adolescents and children in Turkey as of April 4, 2020. This curfew ended as of June 22, 2020 (6). Therefore, adolescents were in home confinement for about four months. The fact that COVID-19 threatens human life, its deadly results and its many unknown features have caused fear, curiosity and anxiety in adolescents, as in all community (1,7). In a study conducted with 7143 university students in China, it was found that 24,9% of the young people experienced anxiety due to COVID-19 outbreak (8). Home confinement caused by COVID-19 affected all individuals physiologically, psychologically, socially and in many other aspects (9). This process can be more difficult especially in children and adolescents. Children and adolescents can act more impulsively and egocentrically than adults. This may be due to the hormonal and neurobiological changes of adolescence when rapid growth and development occurs (10). During this period, friendships and school education are important, home isolation can feel like torture to adolescents (11). Home isolation can cause various psychological problems such as boredom, spending more time on the net, spending TV for a longer period of time, being less active, gaining weight and sleep problems (12). One study shows that home isolation causes psychological and behavioural problems in young people such as distraction, irritability and the fear of asking questions about the pandemic (13). Another study reports that 50.6% of the young people did not experience any psychological problems during the pandemic, while 24.7% experienced mild psychological problems and 13.3% experienced moderate psychological problems (14).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study Design and Sampling

This study was conducted in a qualitative descriptive design to find out the effects of home confinement caused by COVID-19 outbreak. 40 adolescents who were studying in Grades 10, 11 and 12 in two high schools in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey participated in the study between April and June 2020.

Prior to the study, permission was taken from the Ministry of Health. Ethical approval was taken from Firat University Non-invasive ethics committee with the number 97132852/050.01.04/. Written permission was taken from the adolescents who participated in the study and from their parents. The study was conducted in parallel with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Purposive sampling method was used in the study. The sample population of the study is high school students who were under home confinement during COVID-19 pandemic in Malatya. For the sample, the number of students in Grades 10, 11 and 12 of the school the study was conducted in was

learned. E-mail addresses of a total of 175 students were taken from school managers. The students were sent information about the purpose and content of the study and invited to participate in the study through e-mail. 45 students responded to the email and stated that they wanted to participate in the study. However, 5 students quit during the data collection period. The study was completed with 40 students, 21 female and 19 male. Data saturation was achieved with 40 students.

2.2. Data Collection

In qualitative studies, the data can be obtained directly from field study observations and in-depth, open-ended interviews (17). In the present study, the data were obtained from the interviews received from the adolescents.

For data collection, the researchers prepared three open-ended questions. These were: Can you explain what you thought and felt when you heard about coronavirus outbreak for the first time?; How did coronavirus outbreak affect your school life?; How did staying at home affect you during Coronavirus outbreak? Can you explain?

For each students, at least 1-2 face-to-face interviews were arranged as needed to ensure data collection at multiple time points. The interviews were made online via computer. Each interview lasted approximately 40–55 min.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data from the participants were evaluated by using content analysis method (18). Analysis unit was the effects of home confinement caused by novel coronavirus. Content analysis method is a research technique focused to derive reproducible and valid results regarding the content of data (18). The researchers combined the text written by the adolescents. Both researchers read the written texts independently over and over again, found and coded the same, similar and different expressions. The researchers who came together for data analysis compared the codes. After it was found that there were no differences between codes, the students' main and sub-themes were determined.

3. RESULTS

The mean age of 40 participants who were attending 10th, 11th and 12th grades was found as 16.4, 70.3% had good economic status and 55% were found to be female. Five main themes and 12 sub-themes were determined as a result of the content analysis conducted (Table 1).

Table 1. The results of the study were defined on the basis of these five principal themes:

Main themes	Sub-themes
1-Fear	Fear of being transmitted with/transmitting coronavirus Fear of death
2- Deterioration in the education process	Not being able to get efficiency from online lessons Getting into a holiday mood
3- Problems due to staying at home	Mental problems (feeling suffocated; getting bored-exasperated; feeling imprisoned) increase in social media use decreased activity
4- Family relationships	increase in family relationships conflict with family members
5- Longing	longing for school and friends longing for pre-corona days

1. Fear

1.1. Fear of being transmitted with/transmitting coronavirus

Novel COVID-19 virus outbreak affects individuals of all ages and continues to create a great fear. The adolescents in our study stated that they were afraid to be transmitted with or transmitting the disease.

At first, I thought that this virus could end quickly, before being faced with too dangerous situations. For this reason, I did not feel too much worry, anxiety or fear. However, I began to fear when the disease spread to the whole world and the number of deaths increased. (female, 16 years old)

1.2. Fear of death

Adolescents reported that they feared especially losing their parents due to the deadly consequences of the virus.

...I was a bit scared when it first came to our country. However, my fear was a bit gone when I found that it had little effect on young people. Now, we are not going out to protect old people and loved ones in the family. (female, 14 years old)

...when the virus began to spread to the whole world and when the people began to die, I was worried, I am scared that my parents might catch the disease and die. (female, 16 years old)

2. Deterioration in the education process

In Turkey, adolescents were banned from leaving the house because of the pandemic. During the home stay process, they continued their education as “distance education”. In our study, the adolescents stated that distance education was not as efficient as formal education and that they experienced some problems.

2.1. Not being able to get efficiency from online lessons

The participants stated that they were not active enough in online lessons and that they had low motivation. In addition, they stated that the lessons were more efficient when they were taught in school environment.

2.1 Statements of some adolescents:

School affected my life negatively. Especially, important subjects were not taught. I am worried about the exams that I will take in the upcoming years and also my future. This process affected our future significantly. (female, 17 years old)

...distance education is not like the education in school at all. At school, we worried about taking exams and this encourages us to study more. In addition, trying to understand the subjects were are held responsible for online instead of from our teachers causes us a special challenge. We cannot directly ask the questions that come to our mind. I think this puts our education in a difficult position. (male, 15 years old)

2.2. Getting into a holiday mood

The method of distance education caused students to be more comfortable about education, not to study enough and feel like in a holiday.

... the fact that the lessons were not taught in a classroom environment gave us extreme comfort, we feel like we are in a holiday. (female, 17 years old)

...I think that I study more when I am followed by my teachers in the school environment. We cannot go to school now. For this reason, I fell into a void. We do not take exams. Thus, I do not study enough. (female, 16 years old)

3. Problems due to staying at home

Staying home affected adolescents negatively both mentally and physically. They reported that they felt suffocated at home, they could not do enough activity and their social media use was higher when compared with the past.

3.1 Mental problems

Staying home for a long time due to pandemic caused adolescents to feel like they were in prison. The participants stated that they experienced boredom and suffocation.

Statements of some adolescents:

At first, it was easy to stay home, but as time passes, it gets difficult to stay home, I ran out of activities that I can do at home....I do not know which day we are in any more, the concept of time seems to have lost its meaning....the same activities are happening at home every day, I am suffocated... (male, 16 years old)

...staying home gives me the feeling that I am suffocated. It is like they took a wild animal from its environment and imprisoned it somewhere. I did not feel like this at first, later I began to get bored and suffocate and this feeling increases as time passes. (female, 17 years old)

One of the adolescents stated that she was happy to stay home:

...I spend my time at home by studying, reading, drawing and doing sport. In fact, it is not bad to be home, I am happy to be home... (female, 15 years old)

3.2 Increase in social media use

Adolescents stated that their social media use had increased when compared with the past due to reasons such as boredom, being away from social life, not being able to communicate face-to-face with friends.

During the day, my only social activity is surfing the internet. Except that, I can see no one except my family in any way.. Even going out to the balcony became a separate social activity for me (female, 15 years old)

In order not to get bored at home, I became more involved in virtual life, like every young person. I am not social as I used to be (male, 15 years old)

3.3 Decreased activity

The adolescents who participated in our study stated that home isolation caused limitation of movements and that they could not do enough activities.

Before the pandemic, I used to go to school on foot and I used to do sport in the school. Now, I spend my time sitting and sometimes lying at home. For this reason, I put on some weight (female, 16 years old)

We are at home; thus, we have limited range of motion and I cannot move much... (female, 15 years old)

3.4 One of the adolescents made a different statement:

I began to do sport with the videos I watch on the internet. I feel healthier (male, 16 years old)

4- Family relationships

While the process of staying at home had a positive effect on the family relationships of some adolescents, it caused some other adolescents to have problems with their family members.

4.1 Increase in family relationships

I can say that we have improved our family relationships just a bit more. This caused us to get to know each other more, I am happy for this (male, 17 years old)

Previously, I would never spend time or talk to anyone in my family. Since we told everything to our friends, I did not need to tell anyone from the family. Now, my communication with my family increased and I think that we have stronger bonds (male, 16 years old)

4.2 Conflict with family members

The pandemic process had a bad effect on my relationship with my family. Everyone's responsibility increased when we stayed at home...it gets tense in the house when even one person does not fulfil his/her responsibilities (female, 17 years old)

5-Longing

The interruption of formal education in schools caused young people to stay away from school and friends. The adolescents reported that they missed school, friends and pre- COVID-19 days were much.

5.1 Longing for school and friends

One of the things I miss the most is the funny moments that we experienced at school. I missed even maths classes...(female, 14 years old)

I missed going to school and my friends the most. I understood that school life has big effects on our socialization (female, 16 years old)

... I missed my school and my friends the most, in fact I did not

want to go to school when there was school, but now me and my friends want to go to school. (male, 16 years old)

5.2 Longing for pre-corona days

Right now, I have a longing for all the things I cannot do. Going out in the Street, doing crazy things with my friends, even going to the supermarket...I can say that I missed everything. (female, 17 years old)

I missed hanging with my friends, playing frisbee, riding a bike and rowing. (male, 16 years old)

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study is to examine the effects of home confinement, which was caused by novel coronavirus, on adolescents. In our study, it was found that the adolescents had fears of being transmitted with/transmitting COVID-19 and fear of death. It was also found that home isolation process caused adolescents to long for their pre-coronavirus life, educational processes and moods of adolescents to be negatively affected, adolescents to have conflicts in the family and to have increased family relationships. Studies conducted in literature are similar to the results of this study (8,13,15, 16, 19,21,22,26).

Novel corona virus, which emerged recently and which spread fast, caused feelings of fear, curiosity and anxiety with its threats on human life and its deadly results. The adolescents who participated in the study stated that they experienced fear of being transmitted with/transmitting the virus to themselves and family members. They stated that the reason why they lived this fear was the fact that the virus spread faster than they thought and caused the death of a large number of people. WHO stated that “mental health of millions of people was negatively influenced due to the anxiety and fear caused by Covid-19 and the problems it caused in mental health services (20). In a study, it was found that young people in China experienced anxiety because of novel corona virus (8). In the study, it was found that university students had fears of their relatives being transmitted with COVID-19. This result of the study is in parallel with our results. This shows that coronavirus causes fear, anxiety and worry in individuals of all ages.

In order to protect the children and adolescents against the threat of novel coronavirus, the schools were shut down temporarily in Turkey. Education was continued as “distance education” (5). The adolescents in our study stated that distance education system was not effective, the lessons were not fully understood and they experienced anxiety about their future. In addition, they stated that the fact that their homework was not checked by teachers caused them to act more comfortable and feel like they were on holiday. This can cause the individual to stay away from school, friends and teachers and experience feelings such as loneliness, future anxiety, hopelessness and stress (8). School is not only a place in which young people are educated, it is also an institution in which teachers and friends are interacting and providing a large number of positive contributions such as motivation, socializing and many more (21). Similar to our study, it was found in this study that a child’s not attending school affected the child’s physical and psychological health negatively. For this reason, “distance education” can have a negative effect on young people’s school life.

Home confinement, which is one of the measures taken to control COVID-19 pandemic, caused problems in young people such as boredom, spending more time on the internet, watching TV for a longer period of time, being less active, eating more and increase in weight gain (13). In our

study, the adolescents stated that they felt like suffocating and bored as a result of home confinement and their social media use increased and their activities decreased as a result of not having face-to-face communication. In their study, Huang and Zhao found that coronavirus pandemic disrupted the sleep patterns of young people and that the symptoms of sleep disorder, depression and generalized anxiety symptoms were seen (15). In their study, Qiu et al. found that coronavirus caused anxiety, depression, specific phobias, cognitive change, avoidance and compulsive behaviour in young people (16). In other studies, it was found that children were physically less active, they watched TV for a longer period of time, had irregular sleep pattern and had less favourable diets, increased weight gain and cardiovascular problems when they did not go to school (for ex. weekends and summer holidays) (21,22). Changes in life style and the psychosocial stress caused by home confinement may cause a vicious circle, and its negative effects on the physical and mental health of young people may increase (23,24). In their study, Brooks et al. found that quarantined children had four times higher posttraumatic stress scores when compared with children who were not quarantined (25) This study and previously conducted studies show that home isolation increased internet and technology addiction in adolescents. This situation has caused adolescents to be inactive and various physical and social problems to emerge.

Home confinement can have a positive or negative effect on the relationship between young people and parents and other family members. Some of the adolescents in the study stated that their family relationships developed, they spent more time together and they were happy during the process of staying home, while some others stated that there was a tension in the family and they were happy, while some others stated that tensions occurred in the family and their relationship was negatively affected. Staying home can enable them to develop some skills, to spend time with family members, to share more with parents, to do sports activities and various activities with parents, to strengthen family ties and to take more responsibility. However, home may not always be a safe place to live (22,26). For adults and children living in situations of domestic and family violence, the home can be a place where physical, psychological and sexual abuse takes place (27).

The adolescents in our study could not go out due to COVID-19 pandemic, they could not go to school and see their parents. For this reason, the adolescents stated that they longed for the pre-pandemic period (going out, playing with friends, going to supermarket...). In adolescence, adolescents attach more importance to friendships and wish to join the society in order to regain identity. They like spending time with friends and doing activities together. However, the fact that the adolescent is away from friends and social environment due to home confinement has caused the adolescent to long for the outer world (9,25). WHO emphasized that the lack of social communication resulting from the pandemic deeply affected the psychology of many people (20). COVID-19 pandemic and home confinement had a negative effect on mental health of adolescents as in individuals of all ages. Studies conducted support the conclusion reached in this study that COVID-19 and home isolation negatively affect individuals' socialization and psychological aspects.

The strength of the present study is enabling adolescents to express themselves by asking them in-depth questions during the most intense period of the COVID pandemic.

The greatest limitation of this study is the fact that the study was not conducted face-to-face due to pandemic. Since the data were collected through electronic mail, adolescents' gestures and mimics were not observed. The study shows what adolescents experience during home isolation process and how home isolation affects their school life and family relationships. In addition, this study shows how home isolation process affects the physical and psychological health of adolescents. The results obtained from the present study can be generalized only to students attending the high school where the study was conducted.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study in which the effects of home confinement caused by novel coronavirus on adolescents were examined, it was concluded that adolescents were mentally negatively affected by home confinement (feeling like being suffocated), they missed spending time with friends, school and pre-pandemic period, they experienced the fear of being transmitted and their family members being transmitted and family relationships were both positively and negatively influenced.

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