

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Post Covid-19 Kindergarten Adaptation and Teachers' Burnout

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Ethical Statement

Consent forms were distributed, ethical board approval was granted (Date: 29.08.2022, No: E-76244175-050.01.01-156568, Harran University)

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to compare impact of school adaptation week (implementation apply by Turkish ministry of education at the beginning of the school year) and acquaintance meeting on kindergarteners' school adaptation and their teachers' burnout. Three teachers from both group participated the study. Twenty-six children were in acquaintance meeting group and 42 children were in school adaptation week total of 68 children participated the study. During school registration teachers in acquaintance meeting group gathered data from children's parents about things that children like. Accordingly, they planned individual acquaintance day for each child in which child and parent attended a week before the school start. One week after the school started teachers' filled Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey and Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist (TOCAC). The normality of the quantitative data was tested. Since both the teacher and student data were not normally distributed, the means of the data were compared using non-parametric methods. The qualitative data were analyzed using the phenomenological method, and the themes that emerged from the data were identified. Findings revealed significant differences for emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment dimensions of teacher burnout and concentration problems and total school adaptation of children's scores in favor of acquaintance meeting group.

Keywords: School adaptation, young children, teacher burnout, Covid-19.

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INTRODUCTION

Starting to a school is a critical period for parents and teachers and milestone for a child (Mirkhil, 2010). Studies revealed that school adaptation contribute to child's social and academic development (Correia & Margues-Pinto, 2016; Eoh et al., 2022; Ladd, & Burges, 2001). For example, Correia and Margues-Pinto (2016) pointed that both parents and teachers mentioned that when children adapted to school well they established positive relationships with their peers. Gülay (2011) found strong negative relation between children's school adaptation and negative social behaviors such as bullying, hyperactivity. Recently, Eoh et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive study with 695 primary school children and their parents. They found direct and strong association between students' school adaptation and their academic achievement. Their findings also revealed that good school adaptation prevent negative impact of problematic smartphone usage on academic achievement. In their longitudinal study Hamre and Pianta (2001) found relation between relational negativity in kindergarten (experiencing conflicts) and children's behavior and academic outcome at eighth grade. This negative impact sustained even when they controlled for gender, ethnicity and cognitive ability. All these studies emphasized importance of adaptation to school for student. Therefore, we aimed to intervene to improve young children's school adaptation process.

Most of the time adopting a new environment is a challenging and stressful event (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016) because novel experiences caused increase in secretion of stress hormones such as cortisol (Gutteling, M. B., de Weerth, & Buitelaar, 2005). Therefore, for children starting to a new school and for teachers beginning of the school year are stressful events (Correia & Margues-Pinto 2016; Jackson & Cartme, 2010; Ritvanen et al., 2004). Studies revealed that young children and their parents signified starting to a new school as a stressful event because they were entering unknown environment, where they met new people such as teachers, administrators, school staff who were unknown to them at the time (Correia & Margues-Pinto 2016; Jackson & Cartme, 2010; Koçyiğit, & Çomaklı, 2021; MacDonald, 2013). Scholars emphasized the importance of positive start to school (Ladd & Burges, 2001; Mirkhil, 2010). Positive start to school was associated with positive academic and social gains for children (Mirkhil, 2010). In their longitudinal study that they conducted with 396 kindergarteners Ladd and Burges (2001) have reported that experiencing early positive interactions with teacher at the beginning of the school year facilitate child's adaptation to school and positive adaptation process predicted academic achievement. They have also found that having positive early interaction with teacher increased children's prosocial behaviors such as ability to cooperate and building close friendship with classmates. Contrarily, early negative interactions had negative impact on children's academic achievement. Having positive experiences with school before the child starts to school facilitates the adaptation to school (Jackson & Cartme, 2010).

There is also teacher side of the story. Teaching is considered as a stressful job. Teachers' stress rate increased when school began (Ritvanen et al., 2004). Just like children lack of appropriate adaptation process might have triggered teachers' stress level too. For example, in the first of day of kindergarten some children experienced separation anxiety which caused them to cry most of the time. Such a negative start might have increased teachers' stress level and concurrently emotional exhaustion (Akbari & Roudi, 2020; Girgin, 2010). Having difficulty to establish order in the classroom and set classroom ready for education can erode teachers' feeling of personal accomplishment. Such a negative process can contribute depersonalization of children by teacher. Emotional exhaustion as a key factor trigger other negative impact such as decrease in feeling of personal accomplishment and increase in depersonalization (Kotaman et al., 2022). All these factors (emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization) consist teacher burnout. Several studies revealed negative impacts of teacher burnout level on teachers' psychological well-being (Jeon

et al., 2018); work engagement (Hakanen, et al., 2006; Kahn, et al., 2006), teaching performance (Wu et. al., 2019). Therefore, we believed that any attempt to reduce teachers' burnout would contribute to teacher's efficacy and children's development. Since first day of the school contains above mentioned concerns establishing positive initial interaction between child and teacher before the first day of school might have had positive impact on teachers' emotional exhaustion, personal achievement and depersonalization.

Need for Study

Above mentioned studies revealed that environment which was novel and unknown to children and parents created stress on children and their parents and hardened school adaptation. Therefore, we thought that increasing acquaintance to school environment and teacher and establishing positive early interaction among parent-child and teacher might have positively impacted children's school adaptation and teachers' burnout. Accordingly, we instructed each teacher how to plan and implement acquaintance meeting. We examined the impact of acquaintance meeting on children's school adaptation and teachers' burnout.

In 2006-2007 academic year Turkish Ministry of National Education started to implement school adaptation week for kindergarteners and first graders. Kindergarteners and first graders started to school year one-week prior compared to other students in higher grades. During school adaptation week teacher meet with children as a group. During adaptation week children attend to school around 90-120 minutes every day. First grade teachers do not start to teach reading and writing activities during the adaptation week, instead they should conduct more enjoyable activities (Koçyiğit & Çomaklı, 2021). Especially after the COVID-19 some schools did not apply the adaptation week.

In adaptation week teachers encounter with students as a group, they cannot concentrate on each child as an individual. Also, in adaptation week teachers do not conduct orientation activities such as introducing school environment (classes, toilets, dining room, guidance service, garden, basements). Therefore, we thought that it would be hard to experience feeling of acquaintanceship toward the school environment and teacher. Additionally, if one or two of the students cry during the adaptation week because of social contingency (Rochat, 2001) other student might have also negatively affected. That is why we thought individual meetings with teacher might have created better results. We compared impacts of school adaptation week and our school adaptation acquaintance meeting on children's adaptation and teachers' burnout. We believed that conducting parent-child-teacher meeting which was tailored according to individual characteristics of the child was a strength of our implication.

When intervention to facilitate adaptation process lasted too long parents had difficulty to participate (Eisenhower et al., 2016; MacDonald, 2013). Even if they participated they had difficulty to respond requirements of the programs (Eisenhower et al., 2016). Therefore, we aimed a more practical approach which demands only 30-40 minutes of parents and children's time. We believed that if our implication works teachers and parents will gain a practical tool which facilitates school adaptation process.

Finally, to the authors knowledge the current study is the first intervention attempt for kindergarteners' school adaptation in post Covid-19 era. During Covid-19 all children had gone through a social isolation period, they could have not attended school or any form of social life except for their family (Larsen et al., 2022). Covid-19 isolation had negatively impacted children's social-emotional behaviors and competencies. Quality of interpersonal relationship facilitated university students school adaptation (Zhang et. al, 2021). Since the previous study indicated that when children trust to their teacher they feel safe at school (Mitchell et al., 2018) increasing quality of interpersonal relationship between

teacher and child by providing positive initial interaction might have facilitated children's school adaptation and positively affected teachers' burnout. To the authors knowledge current study is the first attempt to achieve this after the Covid-19 era.

Purpose of the current study was to examine impact of individual acquaintance day that was planned and conducted by teacher one week before the beginning of the school on children's school adaptation and teachers' burnout. In line with this purpose, the following research questions were investigated:

1. Will there be a significant difference in school adaptation variables between children who started school after the introductory meeting and their peers who were not subjected to the introductory meeting?

2. Will there be a difference in professional burnout between teachers who implemented the introductory meeting and those who did not?

3. Is there a difference between the evaluations of the school adaptation processes of teachers, their students, and parents from the previous year compared to this year, between those who implemented the introductory meeting and those who did not?

METHOD

Research Design

In the research, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Therefore, a mixed-methods design was applied. The data, especially those related to the comparison of children's school adaptation, were collected using a quasi-experimental approach. However, since it was not possible to apply a fully experimental approach, qualitative data were used to understand the possible reasons for any differences in school adaptation between the children in the intervention and control groups. A similar situation applied to teacher burnout. Thus, by utilizing qualitative data, an attempt was made to facilitate the interpretation of the quantitative data. For this reason, a mixed research design was used in the study.

The study was conducted with the permission of Harran University, Şanlıurfa, Turkey. Permission dates and protocol numbers were 29.08.2022- E-76244175-050.01.01-156568. We received all required ethic permissions from related authorities including consents of parents. The study compared treatment and control groups teachers' burnout levels and their children's school adaptation. Assignment to the groups was not random therefore it is a quasi-experimental design. Beside the quantitative data, qualitative data about impact of the acquaintance meeting and Covid-19 impact on school adaptation were gathered from both groups.

Participants

During summer purpose and content of the study were announced through City Representative of Ministry of National Education and social media. Thus, teachers became aware of the study. However, for two months no teacher had contacted with researchers. Therefore, researchers contacted with a project kindergarten related to Harran University. It is a public kindergarten. The kindergarten aimed to serve gifted young children. It was a new kindergarten and during the study they accepted their first children. The kindergarten and their teachers accepted to participate the study as treatment. Researchers found three teachers from another public kindergarten to participate the study as control group. Probably the reason for finding volunteer teachers to participate the study might have been teachers' lack of desire to spend effort on "school work" before the start of school year.

Only six teachers from two public kindergartens accepted to participate the study. All teachers were female. The ages of the treatment and control groups teachers ranged from 30 to 33, 33 to 41 with a mean age of 31.66 (SD= 1.51) and 37,33 (SD= 4.04) respectively. Treatment and control groups teachers' educational level ranged from 17 to 18 and 16 to 18 with mean years of 17.66 (SD = 0.57) and 16.66 (SD = 1.15) respectively. Table 1 represented descriptive data for teachers.

Table 1. Teacher demographics

Group	Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Treatment group	Age	30	33	21.66	1.51
	Years of education	17	18	17.66	0.57
	Seniority	13	18	15.33	2.52
Control group	Age	33	41	37.33	4.04
	Years of education	16	18	16.66	1.15
	Seniority	7	12	10.00	2.65

Originally, 26 parents from treatment group and 46 from control group agreed their children to participate the study. However, four children from control group left their school before second measurements therefore final total of 42 children from control group participated the study. Of the 26 children in treatment group 15 (57.7%) were boys and 11 (43.3%) were girls. Of the 42 children in control group 21 (50%) were boys and 21 (50%) were girls. Table 2 represented descriptive data for children. As table 2 reveals children from treatment and control groups were coming from similar socio-economical background.

Table 2. Children demographics

Group	Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
Treatment group	Age (Months)	45	73	60.92	7.35
	Child's Year of Prior Education	0	3	1.07	1.09
	Mother Education	0	18	11.81	5.07
	Father Education	0	20	12.27	4.64
	Income (Turkish Lira)	4950	45000	18413.46	11133.19
Control group	Age (Months)	60	74	66.62	4.20
	Child's Year of Prior Education	0	2	0.36	0.53
	Mother Education	0	17	10.90	4.92
	Father Education	5	18	12.07	3.38
	Income (Turkish Lira)	3500	35000	13550	8062.59

Instruments

Qualitative Data Collection Questions

It was aimed to gain in-depth information on whether there was a difference between teachers who implemented and did not implement the orientation program, in terms of their own, their students', and their parents' school adaptation process from a year ago to the current year of the study. In this context, we first asked two questions about whether the teachers' working conditions had changed. Then, we asked the teachers to compare the adaptation processes of

themselves, their students, and the parents between the previous year and this year. We asked the following questions: 1) Are you working in the same school that you worked last year? 2) Has number of children in your class changed from last year to this year? If yes, how has it changed? 3) When you compare first week of last school year and first week of this school year do you see any difference in terms of children's school adjustment? Why/ Why not? 4) When you compare first week of last school year and first week of this school year is there any difference in terms of parents' school adjustment? Why/Why not? 5) When you compare first week of last school year and first week of this school year as a teacher is there a difference in your school adjustment? If yes, why? Teachers used pseudonyms and provided written responses for these questions. In each teacher group one volunteer teacher gathered responses and handed them to researchers. Thus, it was not possible to for research to identify respondents' identity.

Teacher Burnout

Girgin and Baysal (2005) adapted Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey for Turkish. It contains 22 items and the scale has three subscales; emotional exhaustion (EE), personal accomplishment (PA) and depersonalization (D). For each item lowest score was 0 (never) and highest 6 (always). Low scores from personal accomplishment was sign of high burnout vice versa is true for depersonalization and exhaustion. Participants could receive a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 132 on the total scale. The psychometric properties of the Turkish adaptation of the scale were reported by Girgin and Baysal (2005), who indicated that the Turkish form was a valid and reliable scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for control group teachers' EE, PA, and D were 0.851; 0.897; and 0.846 respectively. For the current study Cronbach's alpha coefficients of treatment EE, PA, and D were 0.890; 0.762; and 0.0 respectively. Depersonalization sub test consisted of five items and treatment group teachers' total score was scored 0; therefore, it was not possible to compute Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Although each group contained three teachers most of the Cronbach's coefficients are considered indicative of sound reliability for education (Isaac & Michael, 1995).

Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist

Aydos et al. (2014) adapted Koth, Bradshaw, and Leaf's (2009) Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist (TOCAC) for Turkish. The checklist contains 21 items and it has three subscales; Concentration Problem (CP), Disruptive Behavior (DB), Prosocial Behavior (PB). Aydos et al. (2014) indicated TOCAC as valid and reliable measurement device to assess the classroom adaptation of young children in early childhood education centers. Participants could receive a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 105 on the total scale. High scores on DB and PB indicate high disruptive and prosocial behaviors. On the other hand, high scores on CP indicates low concentration problems. For first and second measurement the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for control group children's CP, DB and PB were 0.917, 0.903; 0.943, 0.816; 0.925, 0.942 respectively. For first and second measurement the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for treatment group children's CP, DB and PB were 0.899, 0.916; 0.927, 0.866; 0.849, 0.874 respectively. These Cronbach's coefficients are considered indicative of sound reliability for education (Isaac & Michael 1995).

Procedure

After the study was announced and the teachers agreed to participate in the study, the teachers informed parents about the study and asked them to sign a consent letter and filled in a demographic questionnaire. Additionally, treatment group parents filled another form with following questions about their child. 1) What are your child's favorite activities? 2) What are your child's favorite cartoons? 3) What are your child's favorite games? 4) What are your child's favorite foods? 5) What do your child like to talk about? 6) What are things that your child is most afraid of?

Researcher conducted two hours training session with treatment group teachers to show them how to plan a "acquaintance meeting" by using above mentioned information that they gathered about child from their parents. For example, usually when teachers first encounter with child and mother/father duo they tended to interact with the child first. Research pointed that at the first meeting teacher is a stranger for the child, child trust his/her parents therefore teachers should interact first with parents to show to the child that they are not a stranger, contrarily they are friends of child's parents. Thus, it would be easier for child to trust the teacher when they first meet. Following the ice breaking treatment group teachers introduced school building (garden, dining hall, other classes, toilets etc.) and staff (administrators, other teachers, cleaning personal) to the child. Then teacher and child came to their own class. Teachers conducted an activity with child related to child's interests and likes. For example, if child liked soccer they painted a soccer player. After the activity teacher hung the activity on activity board of the class. Teacher also introduced the child his/her cupboard and stack child's picture on the cupboard. Teacher mentioned to the child that cupboard belongs to him/her. Thus, acquaintance meeting finalized. Each acquaintance meeting lasted between 20-25 minutes. All meeting conducted on the last week of summer holiday. Following week school started.

At the end of the first week of the school researches asked teachers to respond two questionnaires, one aimed to provide data on school adjustment of the children and the other teacher burnout. Teachers also responded to open ended questions which was designed for gathering quantitative data.

RESULTS

Comparison of Children's Adaptation

The primary analysis did not reveal any significant effects of children's gender and prior schooling year. Therefore, these variables were not considered in further analysis. Shapiro-Wilks test revealed that treatment and control groups children's scores for (TOCAC) and its' three subtests (CP), (DB) and (PB) were not normally distributed ($p < .001$). Therefore, we used Mann-Whitney U tests to compare children's results. For the children in the treatment group mean scores for (CP), (DB), (PB) and total adaptation were 27.35 (SD=7.99); 6.04 (SD=8.20); 19.61 (SD=5.37); 53 (SD = 7.86) respectively. For the children in the control group mean scores for (CP), (DB), (PB) and total adaptation were 23.04 (SD = 8.30); 6.19 (SD = 8.36); 16.64 (SD = 6.39); 45.88 (SD = 10.13) respectively. Although treatment groups' PB mean score was higher than control groups' score the difference was not significant.

For, CP, Mann-Whitney U test indicated significant difference between the treatment (Mdn = 40.92); and the control (Mdn = 30.52), $U = 379$, $p = 0.034$ groups. Since treatment groups' mean score (27.35) was higher than control (23.04) group the finding revealed that treatment group children experienced significantly less concentrations problems than control group children. Another significant difference occurred for total adaptation score. Mann-Whitney U test result was the treatment (Mdn = 43.35); and the control (Mdn = 29.02), $U = 379$, $p = 0.034$ groups. This result showed that treatment group school adaptation was higher than control group. The effect sizes for CP and total adaptation calculated by dividing the square of Z value to the sample size minus one. The effect size for the CP and total were as 0.067, 0.12 respectively. It indicates that 6.7% and 12% of the variability in the ranks is accounted for the independent variable.

Comparison of Teachers' Burnout

Sample size for teachers were small and the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality indicated that the data are not normally distributed ($p < .001$); therefore, non-parametric test was used to analyse the teachers' quantitative data. For both groups

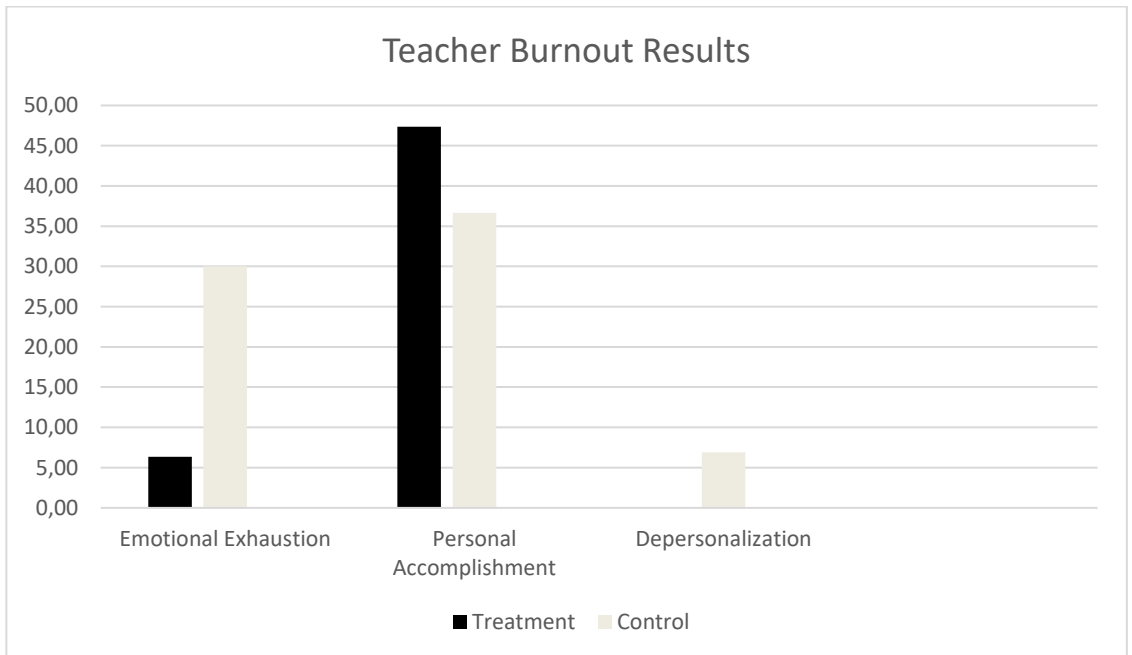
(treatment and control) teachers' post-test result from pre-test were subtracted and conducted series of (total of 12) Mann-Whitney U tests. Table 3 showed mean scores that teachers from treatment and control groups obtained from burnout scale.

Table 3. Teacher means for burnout

Group	Variables	Mean
Treatment group	Emotional exhaustion	6.33
	Personal accomplishment	47.37
	Depersonalization	0.0
Control group	Emotional exhaustion	30.0
	Personal accomplishment	36.66
	Depersonalization	6.90

For EE, Mann-Whitney U test indicated significant difference between the treatment (Mdn = 2); and the control (Mdn = 5), $U = 0.00, p = 0.046$ groups. Since control groups EE mean score (30) was much higher than treatment groups' EE mean score (6.33) the findings yielded that treatment group teachers experienced significantly less emotional exhaustion compared to teachers in the control group.

Figure 1. Teacher burnout results.



Interestingly exactly same results came out for PA again the Mann-Whitney U test indicated significant difference between the treatment (Mdn = 2); and the control (Mdn = 5), $U = 0.00, p = 0.046$ groups. Treatment group's PA mean score (47.37) was higher than control group's mean (36.66) score; therefore, Mann-Whitney U test yielded that teachers in treatment group experience significantly higher PA than control teachers in control group. Although treatment

teachers' mean score for D was lower than control group teachers' mean for D the difference did not reach statistical significance $U = 1.50$, $p = 0.121$.

In Depth Teachers' Comparison Between Last and Current Years

All teachers responded to five questions. All teachers in control group stated that they continued to work same school which they worked last year. Contrary, it was treatment teachers' first year in their school. All teachers reported decrease in number of children in their classroom. Rest of the questions (question 3,4,5) were open ended questions. We analyze open ended responses through phenomenological data analysis. Creswell (2012, p.52) suggested that "Phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings." We followed this model and through reduction process we clustered the data into themes which reflected meaning of experienced phenomenon. As recommended by Cohen and Crabtree (2008) for verification and to ensure conformability two researchers independently examined the data and derived themes from the data. Finally, researchers negotiated on naming of themes that had similar contents. Two major themes derived from the data.

Acquaintance Meeting Facilitate School Adaptation Process for Parent, Children and Teachers

Treatment group teachers provided nine responses where they compared last year and this year in terms of school adaptation process for children, parents and teacher. Seven out of nine responses they mentioned the positive impact of acquaintance meeting for all parties. Examples of teachers' responses listed below:

Treatment Teacher One: When compared to last year this year I did not have crying child or child who could not adapt. I think reason for that was during acquaintance meeting I told children that I have spoken with their mother and I know their mother. Therefore, children trusted me.

This year's parents were more educated than my last year parents I think this facilitate the process. Also I think acquaintance meeting that we conducted before the school facilitate the school adaptation too.

I think acquaintance meeting had positive impact on children's school adaptation therefore it facilitated my adaptation too. Since it is my first year in this school my adaptation was affected by children's adaptation.

Treatment Teacher Two: Last year I had more crying students..... I had children who had cried every day for two months. This year I did not live that kind of problems. I think acquaintance meeting facilitated the school adaptation process.

However, this year I met with the family during acquaintance meeting I had chance to talk with them therefore they were less anxious. We had chance to provide information on how to support their children's adaptation process.

Last year I saw and met with children for the first time, first day of the school. However, this year because of acquaintance meeting I had chance to meet and connect with children before the beginning of the school.

Treatment Teacher Three: After parents saw school environment in acquaintance meeting they told that they can securely send their child to the school.

Covid-19 impact on school adaptation

Unlike treatment teachers, two teachers in control group emphasized impact of Covid-19 when they compared this year

and last year school adaptation process. Examples of teachers' responses listed below:

Control Teacher One: Last year because of Covid-19 we could not fully conduct school adaptation week. Therefore, last year children had difficulty adapting to school. This year we had school adaptation week. School adaptation week facilitate children's adaptation process.

Control Teacher Three: Last year children's school adaptation lasted longer than this year. This year we had fewer crying children and children who could not adapt to school. I believed last year it was Covid-19 effect that made school adaptation harder.

Last year because of Covid-19 as teachers we could not come to school regularly therefore we could not adapt to school either. During Covid-19 era I believed children spent a lot of time with technological devices such as TV, tablet and smartphones therefore for I thought their perception level dropped.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to compare impacts of individual acquaintance meeting and school adaptation week on children's school adaptation and teachers' burnout. We reached significant differences for several subtests that we gathered data for.

The children in the treatment group had significantly lower concentration problems (CP) and higher overall school adaptation than control group children. This finding was somewhat consisted with earlier studies which stressed contribution of positive early interaction between teacher and child on children's school adaptation (Jackson & Cartme, 2010; Ladd & Burges, 2001; Mirkhil, 2010). Qualitative data showed that treatment teachers emphasized role of acquaintance meeting as a facilitator of their children's and even parent's school adaptation process; whereas, control group teachers pointed ending of Covid-19 as a facilitator factor. Therefore, for treatment teachers, positive individual early interaction between treatment teachers and their children might be the reason for better school adaptation. Since education is a reciprocal process teachers' burnout level also affected children's outcomes (Kotaman et al., 2022). The potential explanations of relation between teachers' and child's outcomes elaborated below.

Control teachers stressed elimination of negative conditions whereas treatment teachers emphasized benefits of intervention and none of the treatment teachers mention Covid-19. We thought that such an attitude can be interpreted as positive impact of the intervention on the treatment teachers. Quantitative data were consistent with qualitative findings which revealed that treatment group teachers experienced significantly less emotional exhaustion and significantly more feeling of personal accomplishment compared to control group.

Several studies pointed teacher-child and teacher-parent conflicts as major stressors that would trigger emotional exhaustion (Aloe et al., 2014; Ugaste, & Niikko, 2015; VanHorn et al., 1999). Low quality teacher-child (elementary and secondary school students) interaction contributed to teacher burnout (VanHorn et al., 1999). Early childhood teachers feel helpless when they cannot find right solution for children's behavioral problems (Ugaste, & Niikko, 2015). Having difficulties with parents is also a source of stress for early childhood teachers (Kotaman, 2016; Ugaste, & Niikko, 2015). Aloe et al. (2014) in their extensive meta-analyses on students' misbehaviors and teachers' burnout suggested to put more emphasis on equipping teachers with strategies that would prevent negative impact of students' challenging behaviors. Acquaintance meeting might had worked as one of the strategies for teachers to deal with challenging situations. Since acquaintance provided opportunity for an early positive interaction among child, teacher and parents, it

might have contributed to reduction of treatment teachers' burnout.

The acquaintance might have contributed to reduction of chaos and increase treatment teachers control over the classroom at the beginning of the school year which in return it might have brought positive outcomes for children such as experiencing significantly lower concentration problems (CP) and significantly higher overall school adaptation than control group children and feeling of personal accomplishment for the teacher. Thus, treatment teachers might have evaluated themselves as better teachers this year compared to last year. Also studies revealed that emotionally less exhausted teachers are more motivated for their work which allows them to experience personal accomplishments in teaching (Betoret., 2009; Egyed & Short, 2006; Kotaman et al., 2022). Our findings consistent with these prior studies. Since they experienced less problems in their classroom treatment teachers might have been more motivated than control teachers which might have created opportunities for them to experience personal accomplishments.

Findings did not reveal significant difference for depersonalization. Age group that teachers were teaching might be the reason for this outcome because teacher evaluate young children's behaviors more positively than older children's behaviors (Aloe, 2014). Therefore, depersonalizing young children is difficult for early childhood teachers. Early childhood teachers are more tolerant toward their children compared to higher grade teachers (Aloe, 2014) because they believed that children's intentions were not bad when they displayed misbehaviors (Kotaman, 2016). That might be the reason for insignificant difference between treatment and control teachers' disruptive behavior (DB) and prosocial behaviors (PB) evaluations.

In summary previous studies have pointed importance of positive early interaction between teacher and child the current study provided some data which gave hints on contribution of early positive interaction on children's school adaptation. The study also extended previous studies by providing data that highlights importance of early positive interaction for teachers too. The study showed that facilitating school adaptation process might have decreased early childhood teachers' emotional exhaustion and increase feeling of personal accomplishment.

The findings of the current research provide clues that the introductory meeting practice facilitates the adaptation of children who are new to school. Larger sample-sized and more comprehensive studies on the introductory meeting practice can be conducted. The effectiveness of the method can also be tested in an environment where the effects of COVID are starting to diminish. If positive results are achieved, the introductory meeting practice can first be expanded in preschools and later during transitions to primary schools. The seminar period, which is planned for in-service teacher training in Turkey and ensures that teachers come to school a week before the start of the school year, can be used for this purpose. Finally, this study contributes to early childhood education field by providing practical and useful tool that teachers can use to facilitate their and children's school adaptation process.

Limitations and Future Studies

Teachers' burnout levels were measured through self-report scales. We used teachers' responses to school adaptation checklist to gather data on children's school adaptation. Therefore, both data gathering processes were subject to social desirability bias. The results are not generalizable due to the very small teacher sample. Quantitative results related to teachers must be evaluated in conjunction with qualitative results. This way, the information obtained about teachers from the research can provide us with clues about how to orient future studies. Future, studies can use observational data especially for children's school adaptation.

We could not achieve random assignment to treatment and control groups because very limited number of teachers was included in treatment group. Therefore, the treatment group consisted of gifted children. Future studies should strive more to establish equivalence between groups. Future studies can also increase the sample size thus it will be easier to reach normal distribution in data. Since our data did not normally distribute we could not recruit more complex techniques such as One-way ANOVA to compare the groups. With a larger sample size results would be more generalizable.

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