

# How did the online education model emerged by the pandemic affect middle school children's academic motivation

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**Çağıl H, Bulut S.** How did the online education model emerged by the pandemic affect middle school children's academic motivation. *J Child Psychol.* 2022; 6(2):15-17.

## ABSTRACT

Covid 19 has affected our lives in many ways, education is one of them. Many countries have adopted the distance education model since. Countries such as China were used to this model before the pandemic and so their research shows that children did not have difficulty in adaptation. On the other hand in some countries students did not even have internet at home experience and libraries were insufficient. Being productive while trying to cope with health problems affected especially young children. Lack of

motivation is one of the problems that they experience. Anxiety about the future, not being able to socialize with friends and being able to maintain their academic motivation will affect their college and career decision. Planning the hybrid education model adopted in the near future with families will also be beneficial for children. In order to benefit this model, which is still very new, applications and following research should be carried out.

**Key Words:** *Pandemic; Motivation; Intrinsic motivation; Middle school; Distance education*

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## INTRODUCTION

**P**andemic is an immediate emerge of H1N1 virus and it is not that young as it is newly known by 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

Since the 2000s this virus has existed but after March 2020 it became global in a very short time. Long in short, some countries have taken precautions for a hypothetical pandemic. The Covid-19 outbreak influenced all social areas such as education. The United Nation claims that 188 countries switched to the online education model which means 90% of the students have enrolled in online courses with or without preparation due to the suddenness of the period [1]. China was the first country to stop face to face education to minimize the causes of Covid-19 virus and losses. Their ministry of education predicts that more than 220 million children switched to online education and are confined to their homes. There are other countries that are not as fast to take action as China, when compared. In this paper, it is going to be explained how online education affects 10-14 years of children's academic motivation. Distance education has many methods. Synchronous and asynchronous forms are two of them. During the normalization process, there are also hybrid and web-facilitated courses to help the transition to traditional education. There is also the question of whether students are assimilated to the new education system or they have a lack of motivation for it. Online education system not only affected teachers and students but also families' lives worldwide [2].

### Academic motivation

Motivation is the pleasure that can be derived from various sources.

Define motivation as something goal-oriented that intends to be made and sustained. There is intrinsic and extrinsic motivation regarding this difference. When students seek intrinsic motivation they usually seek inner completeness rather than an extrinsic reward. On the other hand extrinsic motivation is influential in this mentioned Covid-19 lockdown situation; therefore, this paper contains both of them. Regarding to this explanation, academic motivation can be counted as intrinsic and somehow extrinsic regarding the student. Motivation includes multiple variables in its content, some of which are beliefs, goals, and needs.

From another perspective, students' emotions are also linked with their academic environment; Boekaerts and Pekrun's study indicates that motivation to learn, attention, and memory phases are associated with the learning environment which leads us to the family and the home that the child lives in during the online education period. The environment is important for children to be involved in their educational process.

Families play a large role in their children's academic motivation. Self-determination theory supports that meeting the student's psychological needs depends on, firstly, how the family organizes the environment, secondly, how the family supports autonomous the child and respects the student's perspective, and finally on whether the parents have a positive and caring approach to the child. Conducted a retrospective pretest-posttest research on 567 parents from Italy and Portugal. They examined the relation between children's academic motivation and extracurricular activities during the pandemic lockdown, and they presented this situation. As

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*Received: 04-Mar-2022, Manuscript No.PULJCP-22-4459; Editor assigned: 12-Mar-2022, Pre QC No. PULJCP-22-4459(PQ); Reviewed: 14-Mar-2022, QC No. PULJCP-22-4459(Q); Revised: 16-Mar-2022, Manuscript No.PULJCP-22-4459(R); Published: 24-Mar-2022, DOI: No 10.37532/puljcp.2022.6(2)15-17.*

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mentioned, the pandemic lockdown affected countries differently. Even if Portugal and Italy seem close to each other as European countries, this study shows that students in Italy are more likely to be demotivated by this period. The scores show a decrease of motivation of students in both countries. Extracurricular activities also had a significant role in their academic motivation. Moreover the results indicate that the students' school level is also important, since older students' motivation had a smaller decrease.

Teachers and the methods used in the online platforms influence the learning process. Also according to this book interactive teaching strategies have an important role on children's academic life with an effect size of 0.74. Also the government and Ministry of Education's decisions had a huge impact on the online process. During the first months they tried to find the appropriate system for every child.

The Chinese government's education policy is frequently researched. It shows that the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 made their schools adopt the "School's Out, But Class's On" approach. According to this article the online education period in that region of China only continued for six weeks till March 16th, 2020. In Turkey the lockdown continued for more than six months and the schools were intended to be online for 5 months. Therefore, I paid attention to the fact that the studies should be carried out in countries where the closure took more than 3 months.

### **Online education**

There are two definitions for online teaching modes, which are recorded and live broadcasting. These modes as synchronous and asynchronous. First method contains videos that are uploaded and students have the opportunity to watch them later. Broadcasting is a real time course and students should attend at that time. The second kind of interaction is better for children to socialize and take assistance from their instructors and it is also beneficial for teachers as well, for effective communication.

However the research shows that middle school children are affected from the online education period, online education also affects college students. Akyıldız's qualitative study College Students' Views on the Pandemic Distance Education: A Focus Group Discussion suggests that web-based online education has much more negative outcomes and had an impact on the students' academic life rather than positive ones [3]. In Turkey, the research shows that rather than China's examples, students had more difficulties adapting and continuing the online, web-based education period.

As Akyıldız states, communication problems and lack of interaction leads students to feel more isolated, not being used to online education at all and habits from offline education and adaptation problems, time management and home environment difficulties. Institutions as schools or ministries or even governments should have given students convenient learning environments and decent equipment to make sure that every child has the same opportunity to become part of the education.

Research which was conducted with 7-15 years of children in China shows that during Covid-19 outbreak 7.2% of the children in their research group had experienced post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms because of the Covid-19 pandemic. And the reason I specifically chose middle school children was, when compared to college students, they are more dependent on family and, rather than primary school students, they are more likely to observe and get affected by the environment. Also in this research PTSD and SMFQ-P scores have a significant level compared to primary school students. 138 students of their 7-15 years old participants' parents reported that they had been affected both physically and psychologically. 67 of the parents say that their children are also affected psychologically, socially and emotionally. This period is also difficult for parents because they did not involve in their children's education until the pandemic. The school counselors and psychologists should have motivated them for their

children's education [4-6].

The transition between online education and traditional education was so sudden because of the suddenness of the pandemic; however, research shows that online education should be taken seriously and it requires systematic thinking and design to implement on the children before taking action. China or the United States, which are also the producers of the online meeting channels, were implying the online methods before the pandemic but some countries and infrastructures of some countries were not ready. Even though they had elements and online access to education, 7.16% of children aged 7 to 15 years in China faced psychological difficulties and issues due to the online education system caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

It has been more than a year and a half since the transition to the online education method from the beginning of Covid 19 pandemic. Educators have been looking for possible interventions to spend the period after the online period efficiently. There are some methods applied in the normalization process because students are now used to the convenience of the online system, and although schools have switched to face-to-face education, it is not clear what will happen in the future due to new Covid variants. There are three methods that are still being used by the teachers which are online, hybrid and web-facilitated. In the online method, students spend eighty percent of their time with online lessons. In the hybrid model, face-to-face lessons take up 20% of the space, while online education varies between 80% and 30 % this method is used mostly in laboratory, language lessons and discussion classes, where it will be beneficial to teach face-to-face lessons. In web-facilitated courses, online courses cover 1% or 29% of the course duration. Had a very interesting research on Japanese people on how to encourage people to stay at home if the second or third wave comes. Their aim was to predict people's psychological situation during lockdowns and they observed a lack of motivation to stay at home any more. They claim that regarding the psychological facts of lockdown, persuasive messages including support on self-efficacy could help people to stay in their homes more, while preserving their mental health. They suggest that not only educators or governments but also health experts, media workers and maybe the most influential ones; influencers could help to spread these kinds of motivational messages.

The sudden change of the education model and adapting to a whole new system without seeing each other face to face and the future not being clear had significantly challenged the students to keep their academic motivation high. Also the students got more autonomous in scheduling the time and being more sensitive about assignments given by teachers so suddenly. This is also a challenge because their parents were also struggling with the online working system.

To sum up, Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on people globally. Education is one of the issues that is highly important for people and students to rebuild a new future. However not every child has the same opportunity, and some of them could not reach any sources to continue their education. Yet there is not enough research on this topic as I guess because of the political issues. This paper discusses several countries and how their students had motivational issues about being captivated at home for months or weeks. Some of them got used to it because the teachers and parents were prepared. Some of them still have issues even though they switched to the hybrid education model. If there will be a second or third wave, it is yet to be decided; but, I hope these studies continue to be pursued for the benefit of children and all of us [7-10].

### **CONCLUSION**

The effect of distance education on academic motivation differs between countries; some of them were well-prepared and ready to tolerate the negative outcomes of the distance education model. On the other hand, mostly developing countries had difficulties to adapt their students into this system. It somehow affected students'

## Çağrı

motivation. The academic motivation also has a great difference according to age. Especially since some children are more dependent on their families and teachers in their education life, it has been difficult for them to keep up with change. Middle school children had difficulties because they have seen the face-to-face version of education and sitting in front of a screen must be pushing them. Although there are mentioned benefits of distance education, precautions should be taken for its negative effects. The impact on education in the long run should be a concern for countries. In the Turkish example, education was put on the back burner and it took a long time for students to get used to school again with the hybrid system. At the beginning students did not have a chance to connect to the Internet and there was a TV show-Distance Education- nobody could follow. The Ministry of Education, teachers, school managers, and families should be involved for a better future.

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