WHATSAPP SCHOOL GROUPS:

A STUDY OF PARENTAL EXPERIENCES WITH INSTANT GROUP MESSAGING

HACER OCAK

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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Hacer Ocak

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Hacer Ocak, certify that

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;

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ABSTRACT

WhatsApp School Groups:

A Study of Parental Experiences With Instant Group Messaging

The WhatsApp (WA) application has been commonly used in many schools all over Turkey. The main purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of parents who are members of WA parent groups in primary schools and how they reflect on their experiences in terms of communication between schools and parents and also among parents. Semi-structured interviews with 14 mothers with children in primary schools were conducted through a purposeful sampling method. The data was verbatim transcribed and then qualitatively analyzed through the use of a thematic analysis procedure. Five themes emerged from the data: transmitting information between related parties, planning and action on subjects in which parents have similar concerns, establishing connections between parents, exhibiting parental attitudes and responsibilities through WA, and drawbacks of being a member of WA parent groups. Findings show that even though WA parent groups have drawbacks, parental involvement is ensured through this online social platform. WA groups form new relations between parents through its functions. Additionally, these interactions have effects on children's relations, too. It can be concluded that if the WA parent groups are managed effectively they may be an efficient tool for parents in primary schools, especially in situations where schools are not able to meet parental needs.

ÖZET

Okul WhatsApp Grupları:

Ebeveynlerin Anlık Grup Mesajlaşma Deneyimleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma

WhatsApp (WA) uygulaması, Türkiye'deki birçok okulda oldukça yaygın bir biçimde kullanılmaktadır. Bu araştırma projesinin temel amacı ilkokullardaki velilerin, üyesi oldukları WA veli grupları ile ilgili deneyimlerini ve bu deneyimleri, okul-veli ve veliler arası iletişim bakımından nasıl değerlendirdiklerini incelemektir. Amaçlı örneklem metodu ile seçilen ilkokul velisi 14 anne ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirildi. Görüşmeler sonucu toplanan veriler birebir deşifre edildi ve tematik analiz yöntemi ile nitel olarak analiz edildi. Bu görüşmelerde toplanan verilerin analizi sonucu ortaya beş tema çıktı: ilişkili taraflar arasında bilgi aktarımı, velilerin benzer kaygılar taşıdıkları konularda planlama yapması ve eyleme geçmesi, velilerin birbiriyle bağlantı kurması, WA aracılığıyla velilerin ebevenylik tutum ve sorumluluklarını sergilemesi ve WA ebeveyn gruplarına üye olmanın zorlukları. Sonuçlar göstermektedir ki, her ne kadar WA veli gruplarının ortaya koyduğu zorluklar olsa da bu çevrimiçi sosyal platform velinin okula katılımını mümkün kılmaktadır. WA grupları fonksiyonları aracılığıyla veliler arasında yeni ilişkiler oluşturmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bu etkileşimlerin çocukların ilişkilerine de etkileri görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, özellikle okulların velilerin ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamadığı durumlarda, grup kuralları ile ilgili fikir birliğine ulaşılarak etkin bir şekilde yönetildiği takdirde WA veli grupları ilkokullarda veliler için etkin bir araç olabilir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

Families play an important part in the academic life of students. An important reason to improve family and school partnerships is the goal of helping students become academically successful at school and also later in life. Through frequent interactions between school, family, and society, more students receive common messages about the importance of school, working hard, and staying in school (Epstein, 1995).

In a longitudinal study conducted on approximately 5000 students from 12 different primary schools, the data gathered indicated that implementing family-school-community involvement activities may increase school attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Also, Sheldon and Epstein (2002) deduced that family and community involvement activities implemented by school officials reduce the number of students sent to the school principal's office or given detention, and increased interactions among family, school and community may be one way to improve students' behavior and school discipline. Similarly, in another study conducted on 38,000 elementary school students in the Netherlands, it was found that parental participation had positive effects on social skills in children (Dekker & Kamerling, 2017). In another longitudinal study conducted at18 different primary and middle schools, it was found that family-school-community partnership activities increased students' mathematical abilities and achievements (Epstein & Sheldon, 2005). Moreover, increasing levels of school-based parental involvement are associated with more prosocial behaviors and less

hyperactivity in children and children's school engagement is highly correlated with school-based and home-based parental involvement (Wong et al., 2018). Research-based evidence shows how important parental involvement is and many policies and programs were developed based on these sets of research (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Epstein & Sheldon, 2005).

Technological developments which make communication easier among people are also expected to increase parental involvement. The technology provided through cellphones, e-mails, and school websites offers many opportunities for an increase in effective communication between parents and teachers. While the ratio of both groups' access to computers, internet connection, and possession of a cell phone are high, teachers and parents do not always take advantage of these technologies to communicate with each other (Rogers & Wright, 2008). Parents may well have material access to technology; they could have mobile phones, computers, or an internet connection; yet because of their inabilities to navigate technology, not all parents use technology to communicate with teachers or to get involved in the school (Barnett, 2016). Their comfort level with and attitude towards technology determine their involvement through technology. Parents with low SES levels do not feel comfortable using technology; yet, it is just an ordinary part of high-income families (Barnett, 2016). Hence, the experiences of parents from different SES levels are differentiated in terms of parental involvement in a school which relies on technology to communicate with parents (Barnett, 2016).

According to the author's personal observations as a school counselor with nine years of experience, technological developments such as the e-school system, SMS, or e-mails are not used very effectively by parents from both low or high SES levels in practice, but the "WhatsApp" application is widely used in schools in Istanbul. Teacher groups, parent groups, teacher-parent groups, teacher-administrative management groups are set up and are readily available for members. Almost all parents join the class WhatsApp (WA) group set up by teachers or they initiate a WA group without the classroom teacher.

Bouhnik and Deshen (2014) explored classroom communication between teachers and high school students who use WA as a tool to communicate. They found that the technical advantages of WA groups are their simplicity, low cost, and privacy. Moreover, teachers and students have long been using the application separately (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). This may offer clues as to why WA groups are so popular at schools in Turkey. 'Hootsuite', the most widely used social media management platform, and 'We Are Social', the global socially-led creative agency, released 'Digital in 2018', a report of social media and digital trends around the world. According to this report, WA is the most common messenger application used in Turkey and the third most popular social media platform after YouTube and Facebook. 50% of the population is an active WA user and Turkey holds sixth place in the world ranking of 239 countries using WA ("Digital in 2018", 2018). Although the prevalence of the use of smart phones has a short history in Turkey as well in the world, it looks like the use of WA has been very widespread all over the country and schools are not immune to these developments

How the parental WA groups as a part of the daily lives of parents are experienced might interact with students' school experiences and school outcomes. A deeper understanding into the widespread use of WA school groups is important to understand what is missing in the school system or which needs of parents are satisfied by WA groups. However, little is known about what experiences these WA groups of parents provide and how the relations between WA parent groups and parental engagement in schools as well as the academic lives of their children are.

1.2 Purpose of the study

One of the goals of the current study was to understand the experiences of parents who are members of WA parent groups in primary schools. Other goals were to explore how they reflect on their experiences in terms of the communication between schools and parents and among parents, and also to understand the how parents' WA group experiences affect other relationships. In summary, the study will shed some light onto how online communications among school parents facilitate the lives of families and students.

1.3 Significance of the study

Social media is defined as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)" and it was first used with this meaning in 2004 ("social media", n.d.). Many social media sites maintain existing social networks while others bring unacquainted

individuals together based on shared interest or activities and it is not surprising that they have become part of users' daily lives because they provide people with the tools of interactive communication (Ellison, 2007).

Creators of WhatsApp call it a messaging application ("About WhatsApp", 2019) but there are many discussions on popular websites such as Quora.com ("Is WhatsApp a messaging app", 2018) as to whether WA can also count as social media or not. There is a possibility that WA groups can also be considered as a part of social media because they are online communities created by users to share information, ideas, videos, and personal messages with family members, coworkers, or people who share same interests. The application provides interaction between the users not only through messages, but also with status updates and the photos and videos attached to the users' status ("Features", n.d.)

Parents' WA groups are online communities to be set up by a parent or a teacher to share information related to schoolwork and provide communication from school to home or vice versa, and between parents. When these groups started to become a part of school interaction, I experienced many problems as a school counselor and wondered what happens on the side of parents. One blogger mum who has 108,000 followers on Instagram and almost 70,000 on Facebook mentioned that "WA parent groups are one of the most terrible things that happened to schools" and suggest parents not to be a part of them (Doğan, 2017, para. 16). On the other hand, she warns parents that not being a part of these groups may result in their child being excluded or marginalized at the school (Doğan, 2017). Another blogger published a post titled "WhatsApp groups make parents crazy". On this post, one parent says that he and his wife became a member of six WA

groups related to school for their two children. After one photo of a bag for the teacher's day present was sent to the group, 100 messages followed it. Another parent complained about the content and time of the messages. As an example, it was stated that at midnight, a message addressing a solution to a lack of cleanliness in the classroom could be sent to the group. She said there are even parents who reply to these kinds of messages to find solutions at that hour, despite it being the duty of the school, not the parents. Many misunderstandings among parents and conflicts have also occurred because of the WA groups (Çalapkulu, 2018).

Besides these blogs in Turkey, there are many articles and blog posts on this issue on foreign websites. "The school mum WhatsApp…" post on mumsnet.com has 239 message responses (peoplearemean, 2018). There is a character list on this first post about the mothers on parents' WA groups such as the "informer" mother who wants to be the first to break all school news or "on it all day" mother who comments on everything. Many parents replied to this first post and mentioned that they have had the similar experiences. Also, the writer of the first post says that she left the WA group and she was missing too much useful information coming from these groups (peoplearemean, 2018). There are posts on the positive experiences of parents' WA groups as well.

Another web article with the title "Is the tyranny of the school WhatsApp group taking over your life?" gives an example of how a mother was excluded from the group in the playground because of what she wrote at the WA group (Lally, 2019). One minor problem that could be solved in the classroom is brought to the parents' group and turned into a social problem (Lally, 2019).

Users of social media suffer from too much information, system updates overload, and excess communication which altogether lead to fatigue (Shokouyar, Siadat, & Razavi, 2018). Thus, it is crucial to look at the influences of parental WA messaging on individuals' lives, since it is used prevalently. Whereas, to the best of the author's knowledge, there are no published qualitative empirical studies on school WA groups among parents in Turkey. The current study is the first in that sense.

1.4   Research questions

The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What are the experiences of parents with WA parent groups?

2. How do parents reflect on their WA experiences?

3. How do WA parent groups influence relationships?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Parental involvement

The concept of parental involvement denotes the parents' participation in education processes and its importance on children's success at school (Epstein, 1987). High levels of parental involvement were associated with better learning outcomes (Hayes et al., 2018). Parents are crucial components of effective learning in terms of creating healthy environments at home, supporting children, and communication with teachers. Over many years, both researchers and practitioners have recognized the significance of this involvement through experiences and vast amounts of research (Epstein, 1987).

Different aspects of parental involvement on effective learning were investigated in various studies. In a review examining thirteen studies about parental involvement and student motivation, it was observed that parental involvement was related to attention, concentration, effort of the student, and increased perceived competence of learning (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005).

Ames, Stefeno, Watkins, and Sheldon (1995) concluded that teachers' school-to-home communications and parents' involvement have positive effects on children's motivation and attitudes to parents. Besides this, their findings also showed that parents' level of comfort with a school and the perception of their children as learners are related to better school and parent relations (Ames et al., 1995). Teachers who used an intervention program on parental involvement practices developed a sense of efficiency compared to their counterparts in the control group (Ames et al., 1995).

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Even though these studies indicate positive outcomes regarding parental involvement at school, excessive parental involvement can have adverse effects on children's school achievement. Wong et al. (2018) found that home-based parental educational involvement is related to better language competence and psychosocial behavior. However, a higher level of involvement did not create better results. Therefore, the optimal level of parental involvement and programs to make the process meaningful and useful should be determined carefully by school administrators and policymakers. The current study will inspire questions as to what an optimal level of involvement is, and how WA communications might interfere with that level.

Swap (1993) analyses different approaches regarding school and parents' collaboration and identifies three models of involvement. One of those is a "protective model" which refers to the protection of the school from parental interference. Teachers are responsible for the provision of education to children; parents are responsible for ensuring students go to school with the necessary stationery and kit. The second one is the "transmission model" which refers to teachers as the educators of children and a guide for the parents. Thus, parents can facilitate the children's learning processes. This approach is not as strict as the protective model; however, it could overburden parents with lots of responsibilities. The last model is the "curriculum-enrichment model" which refers to parental involvement with a focus on curriculum. This model allows a major interference from parents, so it could make the control over parents hard for the teachers (Swap, 1993).

In 2011, Hornby added three more categories to Swap's models. The "expert model" is named as the model in which the teachers are the experts and parents only

receive instructions and information about their children. The "consumer model" gives all the responsibility of decision-making to the parents and teachers play a consultant role. The "partnership model" is the model that teachers and parents share the responsibilities on optimal education approach, decision-making processes, and planning. Hornby (2011) views the partnership model as the most appropriate model of all.

Additionally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)'s Parent Involvement Model accentuates the parenting role; whereas, Epstein (2002) offers a different approach in which she defines six main standards for parental involvement. Epstein's Parental Involvement Theory and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parent Involvement Model will be summarized in detail in the following sub-sections.

2.1.1   Epstein's Parental Involvement Theory

Joyce Epstein published an article in 1995 and wrote a book called School, Family, and Community Partnership on parental involvement in 2001. Her theory is shaped as a result of a research study that was endorsed by the U.S. State Board of Education to increase student success through family-school-community partnerships (Epstein et al., 2002). The partnership refers to shared responsibility with schools and other community organizations. Families actively support their children; this is sustainable throughout the student's school life and applicable to all the learning settings (home, school, playgrounds, community settings, etc.) (Epstein & Sheldon, 2005).

In order to establish a successful implementation of the family-school-community partnership approach, the U.S. State Board of Education recommended six

standards based on Epstein's research (Epstein et al., 2002). The first of these is "parenting or parent education" which effectively means supporting the family to establish a healthy home environment through family education such as family support programs or seminars on different topics (health, nutrition, etc.) and home visits. As results of this factor, students may be aware and more appreciative of their parents' efforts and thus respect them. They can learn positive qualities, habits, and values from their parents. They can be made aware of the importance of school. Parents can have a better understanding of the children's development and challenges that they may come across. Also, they will feel supported by other families as well as the school. They will feel more confident about parenting, as a result (Epstein et al., 2002).

The second standard is "communicating and creating a welcoming climate". It is necessary to promote effective forms of two-way communication between school and the family about school programs and children's learning. Parents can monitor their children's progress and develop an awareness of school processes (Epstein et al., 2002).

The third standard is "volunteering" which is the active involvement and organization of activities by parents to provide help and support to the school. Volunteer programs to help teachers, students, administrators or other parents, or fundraising for the school are examples of these voluntary activities. Students may develop their skills in communicating with adults; parents' feelings of comfort about school may also be increased and they may well feel more valued and welcomed at school (Epstein et al., 2002).

Fourthly, "supporting learning at home" involves families helping students at home by providing them with instructions and information on how to do so. In this way,

students may establish proximity between the home and school environment and feel more comfortable at school (Epstein et al., 2002).

In this model, a fifth standard, decision-making and advocacy support parents' involvement in decision-making processes, especially about school improvement and student performance. Advisory councils, PTA meetings, and other family organizations that parents could attend as a leader or participant are some examples. As a result, students may feel that their rights are protected. Parents can feel that they have an impact on the child's education and share their experiences with other families. Moreover, teachers may be aware of the families' perspective on school policies and decisions (Epstein et al., 2002).

The last standard is "collaborating with the community" meaning integrating community services to support school, students, and families. Summer programs, health, cultural, and recreation-related programs can enhance students' talents by the help of enriched environments and programs (Epstein, et al., 2002).

2.1.2 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parent Involvement Model

After many years of research, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) offered a similar model to Epstein's, but from a more psychological perspective in the parental involvement process. They started with the question of why parents get involved in their children's education process. Then they expanded the theory to how they get involved and how they produce positive outcomes out of their involvement.

The model consists of five levels and starts with the first level that focuses on the parent's motivation to be involved. They assert that parents get involved for two

reasons: parental role construction and the need of efficacy to help children succeed in school. Level 1 also includes parents' perception of invitations from school and life context variables (parental knowledge, skill, time, energy, and family culture) (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). At this level, school plays an important role in terms of creating a welcoming climate for parents. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) also give some advice regarding school and teacher practices to increase schools' potential for inviting parental involvement. These pieces of advice include having an inviting school environment where teachers are willing to improve parental involvement by getting to know the families, use both current resources and offer new opportunities, and being student-centered as a whole school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parents' motivation to get involved in school contributes to parental involvement behaviors. Level 2, according to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) consists of parental involvement forms such as the values, goals, expectations, home and school activities for involvement. Parents should clearly communicate with their children about their expectations, values, and goals for student learning. Home involvement generally includes talks after school and homework monitoring, while school involvement includes participation in school activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Level 3 consists of the learning mechanisms such as reinforcements, modelling and instructions. These mechanisms, through parental involvement, influence child outcomes. On the other hand, these mechanisms become useful for academic success only when children understand and internalize them (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Levels 4 and 5 are about the beneficial influences of parental involvement on child outcomes. Level 4 focuses on the student's attributes to be successful. These attributes are: academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, self-regulatory skills, and the social dimension of success. Academic self-efficiency refers to the confidence of one's competence to learn while intrinsic motivation implies the specific curiosity towards a subject. Self-regulatory skills refer to managing skills for time, work, and strengths and weaknesses. Last attribute is the social dimension which implies doing teamwork when needed (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Finally, Level 5 denotes the student's achievement which is the ultimate goal (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

2.2   Communication through technology

Communication through technology brings about constraints not only in the school environment, but also in all kinds of communication. It is useful to first mention relevant theories, so that parental involvement through technology could be better understood. In the literature, there are several theories or models on the use and limitations of technology.

The following two sections describe two of them: Davis' Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Resources and Appropriation Theory of Van Dijk. Davis (1989) focuses on perceptions about ease of use and Van Dijk (2017) mentions the inequalities in terms of technology use.

2.2.1   Davis' Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Davis (1989) proposed this model during the years that indicated rapid increase in computer use. His first aim was to determine the factors underlying the acceptance of computer technology. In this context, he suggested two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). Davis defines perceived usefulness as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" and perceived ease of use as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Davis, p. 320, 1989).

These two factors are affected by external aspects such as cultural, political, and social (language, skills, and facilitators) (Surendran, 2012). A study which analyzed the psychological background of technology acceptance was conducted with 100 users of an e-mail system. It was found that system use is affected by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence (the effect of the usage of the supervisors), and the psychological presence of the message sender in terms of how much the system conveys non-verbal cues i.e., face-to-face communication applications as compared to electronic mails (Karahanna & Straub, 1999). Perceived ease of use was found to be affected by the accessibility of the medium. However, system facilitators such as training, helplines, and user support do not affect system use (Karahanna & Straub, 1999).

Another study included 275 people consisting of youth, teachers, technologists, marketers, and developers of information systems. It was revealed that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness significantly predict social media adaptation (Dzandu, Boateng, Agyemang, & Quansah, 2016).

2.2.2 Resources and Appropriation Theory of Van Dijk

This theory includes a more sociological overview compared to Davis' psychological perspective. Digital divide refers to the inequality in society in terms of accessibility to technology. At first, the researchers focused on a narrower meaning of access – the physical access (Van Dijk, 2017). They then realized that the meaning was not only limited to obtaining the hardware or the software, but also motivation, attitude, skills, competence, and expectation of getting physical access also turned out to be substantial components of the digital divide. Van Dijk (2005) called the second level the "deepening divide".

Physical access is related to demographic characteristics which have sociological and economic components that include race, gender, age, and occupation. On the other hand, at a deeper level, obtaining technology alone is not enough. The individual must also have skills and competence in order to use it. These skills are necessary to operate the digital medium, communicate with it, and to create new contents. Those skills again primarily depend on the level of education and age (Van Dijk, 2005).

The last phase of access is the access of usage which refers to the amount of time of usage and the number of applications that are used. The time spent on the Internet and use of applications are on the increase overall. However, in the recent years the low-educated users in developed countries are spending more time on the internet than those with a higher level of education (Van Dijk &Van Deursen, 2014). Research also reveals that highly educated users use the internet for educational, work, or economy-related purposes; while low educated individuals are using it for reasons such as entertainment or passing time (Van Dijk & Van Deursen, 2014; Van Dijk, 2005; Zillien & Hargittai,

2009). In the meantime, specific applications appeal to specific user groups depending on gender, age, education, or occupation (Van Dijk, 2005).

Van Dijk (2005) presents the core arguments of his theory as the following:

First, he claims that personal (age, gender, intelligence, personality, health, ethnicity) and positional (occupation, education, nation, labor position) inequalities cause inequality of distribution of resources. Digital technologies are one of these resources. Digital access is also affected by the characteristics of the technologies. As these digital technologies are a way to participate in the society, unequal digital access causes unequal active participation in society. He also claims that this is a vicious cycle which intensifies the categorical inequalities due to unequal participation.

2.3   Technology use of parents

In recent years, many technological tools such as websites, emails, e-school systems, and messenger applications have been created as a bridge of communication between the school and parents, but these systems are commonly used to provide information from school to home or vice versa. Lewin and Luckin (2010) asserted that technology can strengthen the communication between families and schools, and it is advantageous for both students and teachers. Yet, providing the technology and connectivity is not enough to improve parental involvement through technology. Parents need support to use technological tools to support their children's learning at home (Lewin & Luckin, 2010).

A semi-structured focus group interview study questioned the relationship between perceptions of families and teachers about the effects of use of electronic communication tools between parents and teachers on student achievement. The study shows that both teachers and parents think that proactive involvement (not physically) of parents has a strong impact on students' achievement (Olmstead, 2013). In a study in which interviews were conducted with 30 parents and 35 teachers from 11 different schools in Spain, it was revealed that both teachers and parents show positive attitude towards the use of digital communication tools where the school management promotes the use of the platforms (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019). Similarly, 12 teachers interviewed in Israel, recognized WA media as useful and necessary for their work. However, some rules and limitations about time, context and management of the group should be set (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017).

Studies show that how the tools are managed, by whom they will be managed, who should initiate the process, and which limitations and rules should be set are the important factors in order to properly use new age digital communication tools. On the other hand, access to technology, ease of use, availability of the tools, and socio-economic diversity of the parents should be considered while deciding the communication tool for the school environment (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019; Flowers, 2015; Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017).

2.4   WhatsApp as a form of instant messaging

"Instant message" (n.d.) is defined as "a message sent via the Internet that appears on the recipient's screen as soon as it is transmitted" (para. 1). It was first invented in 1971

as part of the Emergency Management Information Systems and Reference Index (EMISARI) for the U.S. Office of Emergency Preparedness. It was a chat system on a government computer network. IM software such as ICQ (I Seek You) became available for civilian users during the mid-1990s. With technological developments, Apple's iChat in 2002, Skype in 2003 and Google Talk (Gtalk) in 2005 started to be used on the internet. According to Larson, IM became linked to the social media platforms with the invention of MyspaceIM in 2006, Facebook Chat in 2008 and Facebook Messenger in 2011 (Larson, 2016, para. 4).

WhatsApp (WA) is a smartphone application and it has been on the market since 2009. The developers of the application aimed to create a free alternative to SMS with no advertisements (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). The users of WA can send short messages, audio files, video files, attached documents, images, and links to web addresses. It is also possible to make free voice calls and face-to-face conversations, send voice messages, locations, and share photos and videos within the application. Besides these, another feature of the application is to create a group with up to 256 people at once and to communicate within its boundaries. A name can be given to the group; users can mute or customize notifications. There are more than 1 billion WA users in over 180 countries ("Features", n.d.).

In Turkey, according to the Digital in 2018 report, among the total population, which is 81.33 million people, 54.33 million of them are internet users; 51 million people are active social media users and 44 million are active mobile social users. 98% of the adult population has some type of mobile phone and 77% percent has a smart phone. Average daily time spent using the internet on any device is 7 hours and 9

minutes, and the average daily time spent using social media via any device is 2 hours 48 minutes. 50% of the total population actively uses WA and it is the most used messenger application in Turkey (Digital in 2018 Report, 2018).

2.5 Parental involvement in Turkey

In Turkey, the participation of parents in the education of children is not at the desired level according to past research (Demircan & Erden, 2014; Göktürk & Dinçkal, 2017; Sevcan, 2015). In the 15th counsel of the Ministry of National Education in 1996, the first important decision was taken as the education of the family from the pre-school age should be considered as an important dimension and "Family Participation Programs" and "Schools for parents" should be expanded. Akkök, İncioğlu, and Elbir (as cited in Kocabaş Özeke, 2006) mention that parental involvement programs have been initiated for the first time in TED Ankara College and Arı schools, and this work has been the model for all other elementary schools in Turkey. These programs included activities such as communication books between the teachers and parents, home activities given to parents, parent meetings, and sending written materials and newsletters to parents (Akkök, İncioğlu, & Elbir, as cited in Kocabaş Özeke, 2006). Another project was also presented by the Ministry of National Education Research and Development Department. The focus of the project was "parental involvement at school" and the establishment of "School Education Boards" at schools. These boards were supposed to consist of students, parents, teachers, and administrators and they were supposed to plan the involvement of activities. However, the report was unclear about how it is to be implemented. Moreover, although the report mentioned the limitations on parents' or

students' knowledge level, it did not propose any solution. Finally, no efficient implementation of this project was encountered (Başaran & Koç, 2001).

In the academic year of 2015-2016, a project called "Yarınlar için Yarın Sizdeyiz" (*For the future, see you tomorrow*) was initiated in several cities. The aim of the project was to give guidance to parents via home visits about communication, problem solving skills, reducing test anxiety, and increasing school success. However, the project was halted due to the implementation constraints and legal issues (Lindberg, 2017).

In addition to these projects, the Ministry of National Education Lifelong Learning General Coordination Office provides parents several educational programs. Between the years 1993 and 2010, the Office organized programs for parents who have a child between the ages 0-6 with the collaboration of different institutions. After the assessments between the years of 2008-2010, the Family Education Program was initiated in 2010 by organizing a more comprehensive, rights-based, and interactive program. It was extended to include the parents who have children in the 0-18 age range and illiterate families were focused on. The program separated attendees into four groups which are parents who have children aged between 0-3, 3-6, 7-11, and 12-18. Also, programs for special groups (e.g. illiterate parents) were created (Ministry of National Education Lifelong Learning General Coordination Office, 2019).

Another program that is conducted by the Ministry of National Education is Family Consulting Training for the parents of adolescents. This is basically a consulting program which aims to teach parents how to communicate effectively with their children, prevent risk-taking behaviors, and make plans for the educational purposes

with their pre-adolescent and adolescent children (aged between 7-19) (Ministry of National Education, 2019). In brief, all these programs aim to support families with parenting and helping their children's learning at home except for the trial projects by researchers.

However, programs managed by the government do not include direct parental involvement at the schools. In fact, these courses are given in community centers instead of schools. Moreover, trainers need to undergo separate training to educate parents and it is not part of their university education. Indeed, Lindberg (2014) claims that parental involvement or school-parent collaboration are not a part of the curriculum in 78 education faculties in Turkey. She conducted a study with 520 teacher candidates in their senior year of the university and found out that their knowledge is very limited about parental involvement even though their attitude is positive regarding the Parental Involvement Scale (Lindberg, 2014).

2.6 Technology use of parents in Turkey

Although attempts aiming to increase parental involvement in Turkey exist, they have not yet led to an adequate development. The reasons are numerous and include inadequate policies, governmental issues, crowded schools, and overly occupied parents. Nevertheless, technology may provide a starting point.

The most common digital tools for parent-school communication in Turkey are websites, "e-okul" (Parent Informing System), and short message informing systems (SMS). Websites and SMS systems are one-way communication, which are used especially for announcements. "E-okul" on the other hand, provides profound

information for each child's progress and has been used since 2007. Daily access to the system is around 6 million and it increases during report card periods. 1.8 million reports (e.g. report card, certificate, attendance report) are produced daily. The system is also accessible via a mobile app (Ministry of National Education, 2012).

In private schools, special programs developed to provide communication between home and school are more commonly used. The most popular and the first one used as school software programs in Turkey is K12. "K" means kindergarten and "12" means the senior class before going to university ("K12 adı nereden geliyor?", n.d.). As the name indicates, the program can be used by all kindergartens, primary, secondary, and high schools. 2238 schools, 2.8 million students, and 132 thousand school personnel use this program in Turkey ("Türkiye'nin en çok", n.d.). This system provides information such as classes the students take, exam dates, or homework. The main feature that is different from the "e-okul" system is that it provides teachers and parents with two-way communication. They can send messages to each other through the system. Also, it is compatible with smartphones through the "ASISTO" application ("K12NET Eğitim Yönetim", n.d.).

According to the author's observations as school counselor in a public high school, WhatsApp groups have been used widely, but not officially. Generally, three types of groups are observed: those consisting of the school administrators and teachers, the teacher and parents, and those of just parents. In response to complaints about implacable demands of parents from teachers in informal online interactions, the Ministry of National Education added a new announcement module to the "e-okul" system that enables communication among parents, teachers and administrators; but it

seems to still reflect a form of one-way communication (Ministry of National Education, 2018). The current research will study how two-way messages are viewed, but among parents instead of between the school and the parents.

2.7   Roles and responsibilities of mothers as school parents

The current research focused on the WA parenting experiences of especially the mothers since all the participants turned out to be women. The concept of motherhood needs to be examined before the findings related to mothers' parental experiences within technology communication could be well-understood.

For a woman, maternity is a critical life event; it is a period of time that implies new roles and responsibilities besides the ongoing important duties in her current life. Giving birth causes changes in the social lives of mothers and those who are associated with them (Bacon, 1974). Many mothers struggle with their new role long before their child reaches school age.

As the child grows up, parental responsibility for being a competent mother proceeds to the next step. When the child gets to school age, most school-related responsibilities of children are handled by mothers. Especially housewives are the direct address of the teachers (Brooks et al., 1997). Based on his research in Sweden, Forsberg (2007) believes that maternal involvement is taken for granted. Mothers are seen as more interested in educational matter or having a need to be in control. However, none of the couples interviewed in his study mentioned that mothers should be more involved. Parental involvement in education is seen as a female role and mothers are presented as being the parent who has more contact with the school (Forsberg, 2007).

Mothers experience new challenges as a part of their children's schooling. For instance, mother literacy is a critical issue for the achievement of the child in primary education. In an extensive study, family literacy was studied in many aspects. According to the results, the children of literate parents got higher scores on tests and literate parents participated more in the school organizations (Brooks et al., 1997). Thus, parents' contribution to school tasks increased children's self-esteem and school continuity (Brooks et al., 1997). Other research based on the expressions of parents about parental involvement in school supported those findings. Most parents believed involvement programs are useful for both children and parents (Tezel Sahin, Inal, & Ozbey, 2011).

According to Jay and others (2018), the knowledge of parents about basic courses is enough to support children in primary school. However, in later grades, the courses become complicated and it becomes a struggle for parents with a low level of education to be involved. In one study, parents reported that they felt insufficient in mathematics. They asked the teacher for more information about the techniques taught at school to help with homework (Jay, Rose, & Simmons, 2018).

In a meta-analysis, findings showed that mothers are involved in school tasks too often in low and middle SES regions (Fan & Chen, 2001). Because fathers tend to work on weekdays, unemployed mothers take the responsibility over helping in homework, supporting school projects, participating in ceremonies, and attending parent-involved activities in the school. In May's research (2008) based on the statements of the mothers, most of the mothers highlighted the positive effect of father involvement in childcare. In the interviews, women said that being a good mother was associated with

distinguishing between the roles of mother, wife, and woman. They addressed that their well-being was interrelated with the welfare of their children (May, 2008).

Peters (2012) shows how mothers are deemed to be responsible for their children's behavior. He explains that, by law, parents are the responsible people for their children's antisocial behaviors in and out of the school and they get parental orders from courts when needed. According to this order, parents receive coercive parenting education and a big majority of the parents ordered by the courts are mothers (Peters, 2012). As education is a part of rearing children which is traditionally women's duty, mothers take the main responsibility for children's education (Forsberg, 2007).

Vincent, Balland Braun (2010) surveyed mothers from different socioeconomic levels. They found that the concept of new motherhood had high standards for women, so they experienced worries about being unqualified to raise their children appropriate to the standards. They link these higher motherhood norms to the effect of community pressure and media (Vincent et al, 2010).

As a result of a mixed-methods study in Russia, Kuleshova (2015) has come up with various scenarios of mothering. She asserted the term "cyber motherhood" to define mothers using social media actively. Cyber mothers communicate with other mothers and share their interests without leaving home. According to the research, 91% of the participating mothers use these services frequently (Kuleshova, 2015). There are mother blogs and social media accounts not only about childcare, but also the identity of being a mother as a social-being. Mothers follow the writings and shared media of other mothers on these platforms. Kuleshova (2015) said that mothers found these sharing methods helpful because they feel motivated and supported by their peers as women.

Based on previous empirical research and theoretical ideas, parents feel accountable for supporting their children's schooling; however, it seems that women are seen as a bit more responsible than men are. In order to keep up with the responsibility, some mothers focus on being active in the online world.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1   The research approach and its rationale

The current study utilizes a qualitative research methodology to answer the research

questions on how parents experience WA parent groups and how they reflect on these

experiences. Qualitative research methods are used to understand how people interpret

their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meanings they attribute to

their experiences rather than determining cause and effect among issues in which they

are involved (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One important goal of the current study is to

understand how parents describe their WA group experiences in the context of parental

involvement. In qualitative studies, the perspective of people being studied is the main

focus (Ritche & Lewis, 2003). The current study focused on the perspectives of parents

as they utilize WA groups.

        The most common data collection methods in qualitative studies are interviews

and focus groups (Gill, Steward, Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008). Interviewing is

necessary when the behaviors, feelings, and how people view the world around them

cannot be directly observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews as a qualitative data

collection tool help us gain deeper knowledge and so, they are more appropriate to be

used when detailed insights are necessary from individual participants and when there is

a little information about a phenomenon (Gill et al., 2008).

Interviews have three main forms according to their structure: highly structured/standardized, semi-structured, and unstructured (Showkat, 2017). Highly structured interviews, as with the oral form of the written survey, may not allow the researcher to understand the participant's world. The researcher may get a reaction according to her/his pre-assumptions. Unstructured interviews are useful when the researcher does not have enough information about a phenomenon to ask relevant questions. In qualitative research, less structured interviews are mostly used because this format assumes that every participant defines his/her world in particular ways. Even though specific information is inquired from the participants, the questions are open-ended, the order of questions are flexible, flexible wording is used, and the researcher reacts according to the current situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In-depth interviews which are long in duration and face-to-face interviews conducted to get detailed information and a deep understanding of a phenomenon may be semi-structured, unstructured, or a mix-of the two (Showkat, 2017).

Since gaining a deep understanding of the experiences of parents' WA groups was within the goals of the study, the qualitative method was suitable in the current study. Parents provided data that I collected through flexible in-depth interviews in a semi-structured form.

A phenomenological study tries to understand human behavior through the perspectives of the participants in the study and aims to express structure and essence of the experience of a person or a group around a significant phenomenon (Simon & Goes, 2011). That means the researcher sets aside her/his biased assumptions about an experience and searches the perceptions, understanding, and feelings of people who

have actually experienced this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). It is an objective understanding mediated by subjective experience (Creswell, 1998). It is typically conducted through in-depth interviews and a small sample size is common. It aims to identify themes on how a phenomenon is actually perceived by those who have had the experiences (Groenewald, 2004). The current research employed a phenomenological point of view since I elicited from parents what experiences they have with parent groups and how they reflect on these experiences.

3.2   Researcher identity

I have been working as a school counselor for eight years after four years of undergraduate education in the psychological counseling and guidance program. At first, I worked in a primary school for three years and then four years in a secondary school. I am currently working in a high school where I have been employed since September 2018. Students, parents, or teachers come to the counseling office for many reasons such as academic problems, family and social relationship issues, or to find a solution to the conflicts among themselves and related matters of concern. When parents have a problem with teachers, they usually do not prefer to talk to the other party directly. On the other hand, if they discuss this issue with the school director or assistant principal, it may be perceived as being a complaint. According to my experience, parents also do not want to offend teachers because they are afraid of its consequences on their children. Also, when teachers refer a problem to a school principal, s/he usually refers these problems to school counselors. School principals do not prefer to get into disputes with parents.

All the above reasons give school counselors a role as mediator or peacemaker and due to that role; I have interfered with many issues resulting from WA groups of parents. At one point, a school principal and I decided to write "rules for setting up and the use of WA groups for parents". Then, the list of rules was sent to all groups by teachers. At this point it is important to clarify that closing the existing groups was not even brought into question. Their value was deemed extremely useful in making announcements, especially the urgent ones, and also a practical method of reaching parents who would often be more difficult to reach at short notice through other means of communication.

Then, I started to wonder what parents experience in these groups, why we have these kinds of problems, and how we could use these groups more effectively. It seems like WA will be in our lives for a long time to come. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making difference in people's lives." (p. 1).

During the interviews, data collection and analysis, I was simply in my researcher role. I have my own ideas about the subject due to my school counselor identity, but I tried to keep my objective researcher identity as much as possible in order not to lead participants. The participants were informed about my role in the research process through informed consent. They were informed that I am not responsible for solving their problems caused by WA groups; they only would have a chance to share their experiences and to be heard. They were also informed that they could decide to leave the study at any time.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1 Selection of participants

During the selection of participants, purposeful sampling and snowball sampling methods were used. Purposeful sampling is one of the methods to identify and select the individuals who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest and who experience it first-hand (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). It is important to determine the criteria for purposive selection of the sample for which the research question is significant (Ritche & Lewis, 2003).

The current study tried to explore the experiences of parents who are members of WA groups related to school. Hence, the main criterion in selecting participants was to be a member of a parental WA group. Another criterion for selection was being a parent of a primary school student. Grade level is the most important factor for teachers' uses of parental involvement at home or at school. Teachers include first-grade students' parents into school activities more than they do fourth or fifth grade students' parents. There is a decline in parental involvement from first grade to fifth grade and it gets even lower at secondary schools (Epstein, 1987). Also, in junior high schools there is a lack of mutual understanding of the parents' role in students' academic lives and that creates obstacles to parental involvement in high schools (Halsey, 2005). Participants were selected from parents who use WA groups in primary schools as the previous studies show parental involvement is expected to be higher in primary schools. In Turkey, a primary school is a school for children from first grade to fourth grade.

At first, I started to carry out interviews with only first grade students' mothers. My assumption based on the literature and my professional experience was that mothers of first graders would be more involved in schools and teachers. Then, after six interviews had been conducted, I realized that mothers who also have older children and had had WA parent groups before were more information rich. Over time, parents' relations increase, and WA sub-groups are set up. As a result, parents become better acquainted with each other. After this realization, I started doing interviews with parents of older primary school students, too. The study took place in various parts of Istanbul such as Şişli, Fatih, Eyüp, Bayrampaşa, Kartal, Kağıthane, and Ataşehir districts.

At first, I sent invitation letters to school counselors of a few private and state schools. They talked to classroom teachers, and the first participants were found via classroom teachers and school counselors. Also, a few teachers who are also mothers and have a child in primary school were motivated to volunteer to join the research. Then, snowball sampling was employed which is a method of enlarging the sample by asking the participant to recommend others who fit the selection criteria for the interviews (Ritche & Lewis, 2003). Table 1 below shows with which participants I made interviews through snowball sampling method and which participants lead to another one. Also, it shows how I met with the first participants. It was not so difficult to find participants because WA parent groups are very common.

Table 1.   Snowball sampling of participants

School Counselor ⟶ Melike ⟶ Meryem
Hayal (an old colleague) ⟶ Çağla ⟶ Sinem
Ayşe (a friend's friend) ⟶ Buket ⟶ Serpil ⟶ Derya
School counselor ⟶ Classroom teacher ⟶ Emel
School counselor ⟶ Classroom teacher ⟶ Nazlı
Figen (my colleague)
Fatma (a friend's friend)

3.3.2   Features of participants

14 mothers joined the research voluntarily. 12 of them are university graduates; two of them had graduated from high school. Nine mothers work, while five are homemakers. Eight participants have two children and six participants have one child. Each participant has only one child in primary school. Seven of those children are from private primary schools, and seven children are from public primary schools. Seven of the participants have only a single WA parent group, yet seven of them have more than one. Features of the participants are described in the following section one by one and the names of the mothers have been changed to pseudonyms in order to ensure privacy.

Ayşe: She is a university graduate and working mom with two children. One of her sons is in the fourth grade, one is at preschool. Both are at a private school. She has only one WA parent group for her older son. There is no teacher in her group.

Buket: She is a university graduate and working mom with one child. Her daughter is in the third grade in a private school. She has only one WA parent group and it is without the teacher. She has no WA parent subgroups.

Çağla: She is a university graduate and a homemaker with one child. Her son is in the first grade in a state school. She has a WA parent group with the teacher and a WA parent subgroup without the teacher.

Derya: She is a university graduate and working mom who has one child. Her son is in the third grade in a private school. She has a WA parent group without the teacher and has no WA parent subgroups.

Emel: She is a high school graduate and homemaker with one child. Her son is in the first grade in a state school. She has one WA parent group without the teacher, but no WA parent sub-groups.

Fatma: She is a university graduate and working mom with two children. Her daughter is in the third grade and her son is in the fifth grade. Both are at a state school. She has three WA parent groups without the teacher. One is for her daughter; two are for her son.

Figen: She is a university graduate and working mom with two children. Her daughter is in the first grade in a state school, her son is at college. She has three WA parent groups. One is a group for her daughter without the teacher, another is a WA parent sub-group. She has one group with the mothers of her son's friends from high school.

Hayal: She is a university graduate and a working mom with two children; her son is a first grader; her daughter is 4 years old. Her son is at a state school, has a WA parent group without the teacher, no WA sub-group have been formed.

Melike: She is a university graduate and working mom who has two children. Her daughter is in the seventh grade; her son is in the first grade. Both are at a private school. She has a WA parent group without the teacher for her son; and a WA parent subgroup for her daughter.

Meryem: She is a university graduate and homemaker with a single child. Her son is in the first grade in a private school. She has a WA parent group without the teacher and has no subgroups.

Nazmiye: She is a university graduate and working mom with one child. Her son is in the fourth grade in a public school. She has five WA groups related to school. One WA parent group with the teacher, one is without the teacher, one is for English private courses, one is for picnic activities, and one is a class WA subgroup.

Nazlı: She is a high school graduate and homemaker with two children. Her daughter is in the seventh grade while her son is in the first grade. Her children attend a state school. She has three WA parent groups. Two of them are the groups for her first-grade son. Both are without the teacher, but one is under the control of a class mom; other parents cannot write. The third group is a WA parent subgroup for her daughter that started when she was in primary school.

Serpil: She is a university graduate and working mom with two children. One of her sons is in the eighth grade and the other is in the third grade in a private school. She has one WA parent group without the teacher.

Sinem: She is a university graduate and homemaker with two children. Her son is in the first grade in a private school. Her daughter is nine months old. She has a WA parent group without the teacher and a WA parent sub-group that started when her son was in preschool.

The participants' demographic characteristics are summarized in Appendix A.

3.4   Data collection procedures

Before the study was conducted, permission was acquired from the Boğaziçi University Ethics Committee for Master and PhD Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities (SOBETIK) (see Appendix B). After approval by the ethics committee, the invitation letter for the study was sent to gatekeepers working in various schools. English and Turkish versions of the invitation letters are presented in Appendix C and D. Then, participants were informed orally about the study, how the data was to be collected, and a consent form (See Appendix E for English version and Appendix F for Turkish version) prepared by the researcher and approved by the ethics committee was given to every participant of the study. Snowball sampling made it possible to interview several parents from different WhatsApp groups. The permissions for tape-recording were taken through a consent form allowing the interviews to be recorded.

There were 14 interviews in the total and lasted between 18 and 68 minutes. I conducted an interview with one parent at school, one parent at her home, and the others in cafeterias close to either their workplaces or homes. All participants chose the place to be interviewed themselves. All interviews were done with the mothers on their own,

except for one participant. One dad came to an interview with his wife and contributed to the interview from time to time; although even in that interview, the focus was on the mother's experiences. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Analysis of the collected data was done manually using Microsoft Office Excel.

When similar patterns started to occur, data collection was concluded after 14 interviews had been completed. The number is consistent with the supporting literature which states that saturation occurs within the first twelve interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

3.5   Interview protocol

The main tools for data collection were the semi-structured interviews with the participants. An interview protocol was developed by the researcher. English and Turkish versions of the interview protocol are presented in Appendix G and H. Interview questions were formed according to the research questions. However, the interview questions in the manual were only used as a source and the questions were flexible depending on the flow of the conversation and the possible follow-up questions needed. After participants had briefly introduced themselves, the interview questions were directed, and the responses were tape-recorded.

3.6   Ethical issues for the study

To address the ethical issues, some precautionary steps were taken. SOBETIK permissions were received before data collection started and before the pilot interview

was done. Because ethical permission was taken before the pilot interview and research questions did not get changed after the pilot interview, the pilot interview was added to the data as the first interview.

Consent forms were signed after participants were informed orally about how the data would be collected and how it would be used. Confidentiality was assured by using pseudonyms and the transcription and analyses of all data was done only by the researcher with the help of the thesis advisor during the two different stages of initial coding and category formation. Recordings of the interviews were stored on the researcher's personal computer that is protected against intrusions and viruses.

3.7 Credibility of the data

Credibility of the data deals with the question of how congruent the research results are to reality. On the other hand, in qualitative studies, people's constructions of reality or how they understand reality are investigated. Hence it is never possible to capture an objective reality, and therefore, multiple strategies are used to increase the credibility of the data.

One common strategy for the credibility of the data is doing member checking in which participants are asked to make comments on the researcher's findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A short summary of the findings was given to each participant to get her confirmation. Member checking aimed to make sure my interpretation matched with the participants' meanings. Also, a sample of the data was analyzed and interpreted with the support of the thesis advisor through various discussion sessions. In order to prevent any form of bias, reflective field notes were taken before and after the interviews.

3.8   Data analyses

As Simon and Osborn (2007) mention, if a researcher is trying to explore how individuals perceive the situations they are experiencing and how they give meaning to their personal world, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an appropriate approach. A two-stage interpretation or double hermeneutic is involved in this analysis (Simon & Osborn, 2007). As well as being concerned with understanding how it looks like through the perspectives of participants, the interpretation of the researcher is also significant (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). During the analysis in IPA, meaning is central, and the researcher analyzes the data through transcripts. It is not a prescriptive methodology. Simon and Osborn (2007) explain the way of conducting this that has worked for them and advise that every researcher will find their own way. In their method, they look for the themes after getting familiar with the data by reading it multiple times and making notes. Then, they connect themes by seeking relationships and form clusters of themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) described thematic analysis as a method for determining patterns or themes within collected data. Then, these themes are used to address the research or to comment on an issue. This means that the data is not only summarized, but also interpreted (Magurie & Delahunt, 2017).

Braun and Clarke (2006) also provide a guide to analyze the data through six phases. The first phase is – as the researcher – to familiarize oneself with the data. Transcription of verbal data can be seen time-consuming or boring but is an effective way to become acclimated to the data; and the ideal is to read the whole data set at least once before starting the coding. While reading, it is suggested to take notes and mark

ideas for coding. The second phase is generating initial codes. The advice for this phase is to code for as many as possible themes. During the third phase, initial codes are categorized, and potential main and sub-themes are sorted. After reviewing the themes in the fourth phase, themes are defined and named. Then, a final report is written. These are very concrete steps and this method is suggested for the new researchers who conduct their first qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I was partly inspired by the philosophy of IPA, but since the current study was my first piece of research, so as Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested for new qualitative researchers, I followed the six concrete steps they described and analyzed the data through these steps. While following the given steps above, I first transcribed the data verbatim myself and formed initial codes after getting familiar with the data set. In getting acquainted to the data, transcriptions are read numerous times. Then, I formed categories from those initial codes. Themes emerged as I grouped and regrouped my categories. There were 14 interviews, so I used Excel macros to manage the data during the analysis process. For the final report, quotations from different participants were given to show the essence of each theme.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the research data are presented. Following a through

analysis of the collated data, five themes emerged. These themes are: 1) transmitting

information between related parties, 2) planning and action on subjects in which parents

have similar concerns, 3) establishing connections between parents, 4) exhibiting

parental attitudes and responsibilities through WA, and 5) drawbacks of being a member

of WA parent groups. Each theme also has sub-themes which are defined in each of the

following sections on the themes. The theme chart can be found in Appendix I.

In order to demonstrate each theme, participants' quotes related to each

corresponding theme were provided as examples. The Turkish versions of the quotes

can be seen in the Appendix J. Quotations are numbered to help the reader locate the

Turkish translations easily. For instance, to see the original Turkish version of the quote

numbered 4, the reader will find Quotation Number 4 in Appendix J. In the findings,

each WA participant mother and their children are referred to by their pseudonyms in

order to provide confidentiality and allow the reader to follow the text easily.

4.1   Theme 1: Transmitting information between related parties

Throughout the data, mothers talked about both their own behaviors and other mothers'

behaviors. Regarding the "transmitting information between related parties" theme,

analysis revealed how information – that is, the content and context of the messages –

spreads from both school to home and home to school among parents via the WA groups. Two sub-themes were determined under this theme: a) requests for information on subjects related to school, and b) sharing school news and other information.

4.1.1 Requests for information on subjects related to school

Participants in WA groups state that members frequently ask questions to each other on school-related topics. Especially parents who need information to help their children on subjects related to school request information. This is especially the case while seeking information about homework on WA groups. One reason for these types of requests is stated to be the point that first grade students do not yet know how to write during the first months of school; or they may not be able to remember homework instructions accurately. Older students, meanwhile, may not want to do their homework and therefore fail to relay messages or instructions to their mothers. Ayşe explained this situation in the following excerpt:

> … Homework is also talked a lot about in the WA groups. Sometimes the kids forget their homework at school; they take a photo of the homework and send it [over WA], or [the homework] the page numbers from the book. They forget them. These routine things are spoken frequently. (1)

Another parent, Meryem, talked about how she needed to ask information on the WA parent group because her son was ill, and he couldn't go to school for a few days.

> Recently, I didn't take Ali to school for two days. On the 3rd day, Ali went to school, of course he came back with 4-5 pages of homework. I asked Ali, which homework was for the following day. At least we could do that homework. Then, we could do the others at a slower pace. The child [My son] was confused, though. I took pictures of [the pages] and asked, folks, which is the assignment for today? (2)

Besides homework, mothers, especially the working mothers express their need for information because they can only make limited connections with the teacher or school principal. They ask their questions to other parents on the WA groups. For example, Buket, who has a busy job schedule, comments:

> We don't know what's going on at school...For example, I might be unable to attend a parent-teacher meeting, or go to a report card ceremony, etc. I like it when I see photos sent to [the group], or when I need something, like I said, when I need it, we can ask about it [to other parents in the WA group]. (3)

While Fatma was talking about her use of the WA group she is a member of, she explained how another parent who saw a student with a guitar asked whether there are courses at school and how her daughter could sign up for those courses. The same parent also explained that,

> … From the WA group, the children's needs of that day, I don't know, it might sound ridiculous, but we even used [the group] to locate a lost item. (4)

Sometimes parents need information to confirm the information their children relay home; and parents in turn use WA parent groups to confirm and verify what teachers have asked them to do through comparing it with the information from the other mothers. Emel stated:

> When the child goes home, s/he says my teacher asked us to do something, etc. The parents relay it back to the mothers in the group. Did your children tell that, too? Is there anything like that? Is there anything to do? That's how we communicate. (5)

Parents who are in need of any information related to school benefit from the WA parent groups. Their need to receive information is met through other parents who have more contacts with the teachers and visit school more often. They get clear and

quick answers through WA. Those active parents share the information and news they receive from school with other parents on WA parent groups, as will be explained through the next sub-theme.

4.1.2   Sharing school news and other information

News and information are shared by parents in the WA groups. In each group where the teacher is not a member, the content of responses indicates to the mothers that one or more members in each group take the role of the mediator/messenger between school activities and parental concerns. These mediating mothers who visit school often, share news from school with other mothers via WA parent groups. Especially room parents also known as class parents who facilitate communication between parents and school personnel take the messenger role in the WA groups. Buket mentioned that the teacher indirectly uses the WA parent group: "The teacher sometimes sends news with the parents s/he comes across." (6). Also, Hayal, who has assumed the role of mediating as a class mother, states:

> In addition to the assignments, if there were any messages to be conveyed from the teacher, they were sent again in writing. They were shared as photographs. We also obtained clear information. Photos were taken when the children had an event, and these were communicated to us. If the teacher saw some problems in the classroom, s/he passed them onto the *class mother* and the class mother shared the news with us. (7)

Working moms who have limited communication with the school management or teachers recognize the value of WA groups. Through other mothers, they can compensate what they are missing when they are at work.

The following statement which Serpil shared is also an example of how parents share information with each other and how they trust each other to be informed:

> Actually, I find it useful because among them there are mothers who don't work and mothers who follow their children's progress very closely. Because my arrival time to home is very late, I get feedback from the WA group directly about the child and the child's school. Sometimes explanations about the homework. Or detailed information about activities, occasions. Although the school is sending us an e-mail about a particular activity, I get the answers to the questions that occur in our heads from our mothers of the WA group. Because they go themselves to pick up their children every day. So, they get live notifications from the principal or teacher or whomever and write to our WA group. In the end, I get information through those mothers from a place that I cannot physically reach. (8)

Besides sharing news from school, parents also share personal information about themselves or their children; and as Çiğdem said "… Or the child has diarrhea as s/he can't come to school today and s/he has a medical checkup today, or using cortisone, etc." (9). They sometimes even share academic information on topics they care about. Ayşe talked about a mother who would complain about her son playing an online computer game that is not suitable for children at their age group. This mother shared academic information and articles from newspapers explaining why this game should not be played by their children. They also talked about healthy eating habits of children and shared information about this subject with each other.

Information and news related to school are transmitted through WA parent groups between parents and this transmission may result in parents to plan and act together on the subjects they have similar concerns. The following theme will explain that phenomenon.

4.2   Theme 2: Planning and action on subjects in which parents have similar concerns

Based on the participants' reports on the content of communication in WA parent

groups, it is demonstrated that there are many activities such as birthday celebrations or

special occasion organizations which require planning, involve decisions or some other

form of action together with other parents. Moreover, since parents have children in the

same class, they have common problems which require on-going parental

communication to find solutions. WA parent groups provide parents with an online

environment to handle such events and issues. Under this theme, three sub-themes

emerged: a) discussions about special occasions, b) initiating a decision with other

parents, and c) collaboration between parents for/against others.

4.2.1   Discussions about special occasions

In every interview, special occasions such as Teachers' Day, National Sovereignty and

Children's Day celebrations, or birthday parties were mentioned. Every occasion

requires different actions to be taken. For example, for the Teachers' Day, parents first

discuss whether to buy a present collectively as a class, or individually. Then, they talk

about the type of present, who is to buy the present, how they plan to give the present to

the teacher and how they are to collect the money. During this whole process, the

frequency of messages increases and long discussions occur. The following statement is

an example of how this process works or sometimes does not work:

> In that group, 5 people out of 13 parents were able to get together. Here,
> everybody else said 'I got my gift' or something to that effect. The task of
> selecting and purchasing a gift was left to me. 'Now, money isn't an issue. Let's
> pick the gift, friends and then we can collect the money somehow.' We are going

to the florist with a friend of ours and we took pictures of flowers to send to the WA group. For 10 days I browsed all the florists around Çapa and Topkapi areas and they [the other mothers] did not like any of the pictures we sent. We were done with the flower thing; then chocolate. 'No chocolate from Kahve Dünyası please. Not from there.' Just those 5 people, it was incredible… So, in no way after that would I want to get involved [again]. (10)

Another important occasion in the primary schools is April 23rd National Sovereignty and Children's Day. Children put on a show on this date. According to the interviews, the duty of parents on this day is to make sure that their children wear the costumes the teacher has asked for. Fatma says:

There are currently April 23 shows; if you are going to buy clothes for shows, for example, information about how the costumes will be is necessary. I mean, it's not like I'm going to write a lot of answers, but it comes as essential notes of information. You know if we have something to answer, things like '…here are children's body sizes, costumes, their prices.' (11)

While Serpil talks about the program regarding the April 23rd show, she mentions children have different roles in the show; some of them doing folk dances and some of them have other responsibilities. As a result of such a complex organization set to a date – effectively, a deadline – a sense of confusion set in amongst the parents. They discussed the program through the WA parent group. Even fine details such as how hair clips are to be worn needed to be discussed in the group. Another parent, Sinem, was told by the teacher how the costumes should be and then the parents had to get organized to prepare their children for the program. She said one of the parents in the WA group took the responsibility for the rental of the costumes and following that they continued discussing the details.

As well as special occasions in the schools, birthdays take an important place in WA groups. Most of the parents organize birthdays and invite parents to these parties through WA groups. Derya mentioned:

> At first, we all started to organize birthday parties in the order of upcoming birth dates. First, we started doing this, then the other parents followed suit. At least 6-7 birthday parties were organized in this fashion. (12)

During the management of special occasions, parents discuss information about the rules set by the teacher or school management for these occasions. They announce birthday parties or exchange costume ideas. All of these interactions focus on special days. As a result of the discussions, coming up with decisions is an important next step in planning and action. Special days are not the only times that parents get involved in planning and action, though. They focus on making all types of decisions about important issues that concern them all.

4.2.2   Initiating a decision with other parents

Parents make many decisions through WA parent groups because they have common concerns as they have children in the same class. Meryem said one of the parents had complained about homework. It is apparently too much for first grade students. This parent wanted to convince other parents through the WA group not to do all the homework. This parent tried to pledge others' support on the WA group probably because she did not want to act alone but aimed to set a motion of conformity to her own homework expectations. Meryem told that the message sent by this parent in the WA group was 'I think we should all decide together.' (13).

For the most part, mothers with leadership skills or class mothers have both active and influential roles in initiating decisions. Sometimes they may even start a discussion at the request of the teacher linked to a WA group. For instance, the Turkish Ministry of Education gives books to children for free. Asking parents to buy extra books to study from in the classes is not allowed. It is a breach of civil law. However, parents can collectively reach a consensus and buy extra books if they agree; so, children can also study a common extra book in class. Recently, teachers have started to ask parents what their choice would be if an extra book would be used at their approval. Figen told that the class mother started a discussion to decide what they should do on the WA parent group. They needed to decide unanimously because even when one mother refuses to purchase a book that is agreed upon, then it is not possible to study extra books in class because of the resulting legal issues. Due to concerns such as these, WA parent groups seem to have become an online setting where many decisions, some of which are legally critical, are made.

4.2.3   Collaboration between parents for/against others

Parents are able to act together through WA parent groups on any subject. Sometimes they act together to resist to their children in order to convince them to accept their responsibilities, or they act together against school management to make them accept their conditions.

For example, Derya, whose daughter is in the third grade said that the children in her daughter's class wanted to have a WA group amongst themselves. They wanted to do this through their parents' phone numbers. Parents discussed that in their own group

and then let them set up a new group by warning them that the parents would read the messages. One week later, one of the boys in the group sent a GIF of a couple kissing lips. Then, the mother of this boy wrote in the parents WA group that she doesn't think they are ready for this. Consequently, they decided to close the group altogether; and on the same day, they announced this to their children. Derya said that at first, she was afraid because her daughter is a tough child and always opposes her; but this time it was not a problem.

She stated:

> Mothers have made a joint decision, so even if a child insisted on it, he/she sees that the other child has already adopted the decision of the mother. So, there were no problems. (14)

Melike explained that her children are at a private school and they renew the school enrollment every year. Hence, parents can discuss what they will do the following academic year on WA parent groups. They discuss trying to get a group discount by collaborating.

> 'How much discount will they offer? Let's do this all together, if necessary, let's altogether go to another school. There is also that type of a parent collaboration.' Such discussions are raised in the WA group. (15)

Also, some parents said they do the same for private courses. They form groups from children in the same classes to get discounts for courses like basketball or English lessons. They also discuss these issues on the WA parent group.

Serpil also gave an example of how parents organized instantaneously on the WA group a surprise for the teacher. She said, after the death of the teacher's father, she had not been feeling well. Then, her son said to her he wanted to make a cake for his

teacher for her birthday. When the mother learned the date of the teacher's birthday from the son, she shared this information with other mothers; they subsequently discussed what they could do. They organized a party through collaboration by talking to the school principal to boost the teacher's morale. She said,

> At that time, I wrote to the group aiming to cheer her up. It was so beautiful; everyone's reaction was so positive. 'Let's come together.' It turned out to be a 'kısır' [a traditional Turkish food] day. We organized it during the lunch time break, so children's classes were not affected. Everybody did something. Also, we collected a little amount of money. We bought a gift for her. (16)

WA parent groups lead parents to plan and act together on their common concerns and for important occasions. Thus, WA creates an online environment to connect them with each other. During that process, interactions among them also help parents to get to know each other, forms new relations or friendships, and provide support for each other. The process of forming those connections will be discussed in Theme 3.

4.3   Theme 3: Establishing connections between parents

WA parent groups have become online sharing platforms that create connections between individuals and groups of individuals. Through these groups, parents who do not know each other personally can build bridges between each another. Thanks to WA groups, parents make new acquaintances and those relations sometimes are carried to further levels such as close friendships.

This theme consists of four sub-themes which are: a) parents becoming acquainted, b) development of relations among all parties, c) socialization/friendship among parents through WA parent groups, and d) providing mutual support for one another.

4.3.1   Parents becoming acquainted

Many of the parents said during the interviews that they started getting to know other parents from what they wrote in groups and their style of writing. Meryem said one of the parents sends heart and flower emojis to the group, which she considers to be really friendly. Then, when they met face to face in the school, they started to chat, and she confirmed what she had thought about the other parent. On the other hand, Çağla said sometimes parents asked the same question that had already been asked, forcing a response each time; or some parents may ask unnecessary questions. In this situation, she may well have formed negative thoughts about these types of parents as she also emphasized that there is such a mother in their own group.

Melike shared her experiences about a public pre-school. Her husband became the pre-school principal of the same establishment and the school is also in close proximity to their home. For this reason, she had decided to enroll their son to this school. However, after she was added to a WA parent group of the school, she stated that she decided to take her son out of the school mainly because of her observations in the WA group. She stated:

> There is this WA parent group. As I said this is all about the parent profile. I felt so bad in this group; I wanted to get out of it. There is no culture, no correspondence. They do not even know how to use the Turkish language

properly. Correspondences were awful. I, personally, am not looking down on them. For example, one member may want to say '…let's not buy this gift for the teacher!'; but in actual fact she messages: '…this disgusting teacher doesn't deserve that gift.' For example, [this clearly reflects] the character of the person. Or aims to comment on someone else's son or daughter. She actually says: '…that's her kid, this kid is rude.' Oh, when I saw such interactions, of course, I immediately left the group. I took my child out of that school. Let his father be the head of the country. I do not mind because these parents and their children would harm my child. (17)

Parents start to know each other before they meet face-to-face and they produce preconceived ideas for other parents through WA parent groups. They can even make strict decisions according to their first impressions on these groups. Their first impressions or assumptions on other parents from WA groups have a direct link to how they form relations with those parents.

4.3.2   Development of relations among all parties

Through the parents WA groups, parent relations are formed, and also child relations can change form, too. Parents communicate with each other on WA groups; they make plans and children also start to see each other to socialize outside of the school. They can also decide to take their children to the same private courses and children can see each other more frequently. On the other hand, sometimes conflicts occur between parents and they stop seeing each other. Then, they do not let their children visit their friend's home either.

They would also retract from other joint extra-curricular activities such as going to the cinema together. Nazlı who formed a sub-group with the mothers of close friends of her daughter also became friends with these parents. They started to have breakfast

altogether, organize after-school activities, and she even taught another mom how to bake special cookies. After a while, arguments broke out between mothers. Nazlı stopped seeing these parents and it affected her daughter's relationships with her friends. She consequently lost her friends, also. After graduating from that primary school, the daughter changed her school.

Nazmiye gave an opposite example. She is also a member of a parent sub-group with the mothers of 7-8 children. She said they formed this group for an activity independent of the relationships of the children. In this group, except for one child, all mothers have sons and this girl has to be a close friend of these boys because they see each other often. As either a direct or indirect result of this factor, the only girl in the group complains about this issue from time to time. Nazmiye describes her observations in the following excerpt:

> Esra is the girl's name. Esra sometimes asks her mom 'what is it mom that you always meet with boys' mothers? All my friends are boys. Meet with girls.' Then, the mother gives an affirmative response by saying 'ok, we can meet with this mom and daughter' to her daughter; but then, Esra says 'oh no, I do not like her. I do not get along well with them'. Actually, it suits her, too. She gets along well with our kids, too. Our kids don't see her as… I mean as if she is the opposite sex, etc; there is nothing sexist between them. (18)

In addition to the relations which are formed between children, there may also be effects on the relationships between the mothers and their own children. Many parents, during the interviews said that they know what is going on in the school thanks to these WA groups. In particular, they tend to follow the homework given to students from WA groups and they can monitor students' academic work. This process can create problems between parents and students.

Fatma explained that one day her son yelled at her because she reminded him of his homework after she learned about it from their WA parent group. She also talked about how they, as parents, tried to give their children their own responsibility for homework. Parents in that class decided that children would take notes about their homework and they would do it by themselves without active parental intervention since they are old enough. Yet, they also wanted to monitor children, so they selected a female student/daughter who is a hard-working and responsible student. Her mother started to report the assigned homework in the WA parent group daily after learning it from her daughter. However, the students who didn't do their homework told the teacher that some homework was not written in the WA group. Fatma said students blamed the girl and as a result she felt really bad. Subsequently, the girl also blamed her own mother for making a mistake such as miswriting the homework in the group or even having forgotten some assigned homework task altogether. The mother of the girl later wrote to the WA group that she and her daughter had problems because of this duty, causing friction between them. Therefore, she would discontinue this voluntary responsibility. Similarly, Nazlı also expressed boundaries. She said that she did not want to feel that she had to give explanations to her daughter about her argumentation with other mothers because she was just a child, and this would create problems with her daughter.

Thus, it looks like WA groups act as a channel of influence on the development of various relationships. These influences sometimes occur as formation of new relations and sometimes as ending the already formed relationships. Moreover, they also lead to positive or negative changes in terms of children's developing relationships with each other and with their parents.

4.3.3   Socialization/Friendships among parents through WA parent groups

Formation and participation of WA parent groups is a way for mothers to socialize and

build friendships. It seems like at first, they organize activities for children such as

birthdays and picnics via WA groups. Then, they set up sub-groups after getting to know

each other. In these subgroups, they can send each other caricatures, send selfies of

themselves after going to the hairdresser, or organize activities without children. One of

the mothers, Sinem reported: "We mothers also need to breathe a little." (19). She also

added:

> As a matter of fact, last year's group was called the 'Lahmacun' group because
> we would get organized to go and eat *lahmacun* (also called Turkish pizza) with
> that group. We continued using the same group this year, too. This year they
> [children] are not around, but the mothers continue meeting. (20)

Nazmiye who is a teacher said,

> Children are actually catalysts that bring people together. In other words, when
> Emre started primary school, I began to form a new circle. A different circle.
> This was a different circle from the education community. (21)

In addition, Melike talked about how she invited parents from her daughter's

class when she organized a trip with her colleagues and gave examples of how they

formed friendships.

> We went to Malatya. We shared photos on the WA group. As I said, I know
> many doctors. Hence, one parent wrote a message in the group that her cousin
> had a cerebral hemorrhage and asked 'Melike do you know a good doctor?' She
> asked if I could help them with that issue. Things like that are being written
> there. Nobody questions why she writes such [a sensitive] message like that in
> this group. Then, there are cartoons being sent, jokes told in the group. [The
> content and purpose] are not only about children anymore. It is like a friendly
> group. Both educational issues and private lives are shared. No one cares about
> the time of the messages. During Ramadan, photos of dishes are sent. It is an
> improved version of the WA parent group. (22)

WA groups also carry the role of helping parents build friendships amongst each other apart from their children's lives. For instance, they get together with their new friends even if their children are not joining them. They enjoy that these new relationships help them to exist in new circles.

4.3.4   Providing mutual support for one another

Parents give and take support to and from one another through WA parent groups when someone needs it. Support varies from answering other parents' questions to doing something for them. Meryem said

> The other day, only one of our parents, there was this English homework. We needed to enter it to the related website, but she was unable to do so. We had already asked the teacher earlier. But I guess nobody else asked. She asked: 'Hey, how do you get in the website?' And the assignments had started a month ago. These assignments are constantly being given. [As a result of not realizing that homework had been assigned] None of the students did their homework. Then I sent the link; from there, I told what should be done. This was a form of guidance; these kinds of things in the group are nice. (23)

Similarly, Nazlı talked about how the mothers support one another when one of them is late to pick up her children. She said she would send a message on WA to another mother she trusted and say something to the effect of "I have something to do. Last minute call. Can you also pick up my child? I will be there in 2 hours." (24) or another mother recollected:

> The teacher asked for balloons for an activity. I forgot, so I write, 'Folks, is there anyone who has sent extra balloons to school or does anyone have extra balloons at home? If so, please would you send some for my child, too?' There is also this kind of helping each other in the group. (25)

Besides these, Melike talked about a different kind of support. She said the mother of one of her daughters' close friends had died and as a result of this, her dad became part of the WA parent group. One day, Melike's daughter told her that this father felt uncomfortable because every member in this group was female. Melike suggested the father to have an agreement. Now, he is not a member of this WA parent group, but whenever it is necessary, Melike transfers information to this father via WA individually and offers support to her daughter's friend's family.

WA parent groups provide opportunities for parents to get know each other, form new relations with other parents, and sometimes they become friends. As the individuals who know each other and share similar concerns, they offer support to each other through the WA groups. These relations and interactions may raise issues on parenting.

4.4   Theme 4: Exhibiting parental attitudes and responsibilities through WA

The fourth theme derived from the research data is about parenthood. During the interviews, the participants talked about their motherhood, how they see themselves as parents, and from time to time they compared themselves to other mothers. They also mentioned that without much question, WA is the arena mainly for mothers, but fathers also are part of the picture; although at the background.

In fact, being a participant in WA groups has become like a duty that needs to be carried as part of their parenthood. It appears as though at times they question themselves on whether they are being sufficient as moms or not. Nevertheless, participants frequently mentioned that the WA groups serve important needs and it is important to stay in touch through WA, in order to be a responsible and competent

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parent. This theme is presented in terms of three subthemes: a) moms vs. dads on WA parent groups, b) maternal concerns about school-aged children, c) making comparisons with other parents.

4.4.1 Moms vs. dads on WA parent groups

The question of whether there is a place for dads in the WA parent groups arose from the data gathered through the interviews. It seems like the mothers are accepted in these groups as natural members. They see it as their core responsibility as a parent to follow the group. Fathers assume responsibility only when it is not possible for the mothers to take part. In fact, even then, the participants expressed that fathers are not very willing to be part of the online groups. The mothers in groups sometimes altogether make decisions about accepting the fathers into the group or not.

For example, Ayşe has a positive experience with his older child's WA group which involved both female and male parents, and then she suggested to create a mixed group for her younger child's class, but it was not accepted by the other mothers. She said "Most of the mothers did not want to do it. There are 16 mothers, 10 of them did not. So, we did not make a mixed group." (26).

On the other hand, there are fathers who have excluded themselves from the WA parent group because of female preponderance. Even though they became members of the group at first as the only dad, they left their place to their wives.

Another example of how dads are excluded from the groups came from Nazlı. She mentioned that they have two WA parent groups. One is with the class mom as the only person as group administrator who can send messages and it is like an

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announcement group which includes dads. Another group is the one every parent can write in. It was set up to organize teachers' day. While talking about this group, she said "No, my husband is not in this group. There are only ladies in this teachers' day group. We didn't need men." (27).

Another participant whose husband is a teacher and works in the school where her son studies expressed,

> … I could have stayed back, but I wanted to be involved in almost everything from the moment my son was born. I'd like to be informed in some way. That's why I wanted to be in the WA parent group. (28)

On the other hand, if mothers are busy, then fathers come into play. Sinem told they only have one father in the WA parent group and added,

> … Probably it is because he's the guardian. I don't know the mother, but she's probably working too hard. That's why it looks like the father took this duty. I felt so. I do not know. (29)

It seems that being a part of the WA parent groups is one of the parenting duties in this new world and it is given to or taken by mothers as part of their traditional maternal roles. In fact, one participant mentioned that they had the fathers in the group at the beginning; but after a while the fathers wanted to form another group only for entertainment reasons and planning fish and drinks parties. The duty of following the WA group was left to the mothers, most of whom seemed willing to enjoy this sacred space for themselves.

4.4.2 Maternal concerns about school-aged children

Mothers' reflections on their experiences denoted that as their children grew into school-age, they sometimes needed to clarify their mothering roles, express their concerns, and decide on their priorities. For instance, one of the participants, Meryem, when asked to describe herself briefly, proceeded by saying: "First of all I am a mother, before everything." (30).

Çağla explained that she was an accountant before, but she quit her job because she has only one child and the child is in first grade. This has become a new experience for her leading her to prefer to become a stay-at-home mom, so that she has time in case her daughter may have difficulties with being in the first grade. It seems like being a mother that is present for the child is her major priority. While talking about how Sinem became a member of a WA parent subgroup and became friends with the moms of her son's friends, she stated

> …now what do you feel inevitably when you hear a name from your child, there is an inner reaction which is instinctive. You want to know their families. Who is s/he seeing? Who is s/he with? I do not know; I may be exaggerating being a mother. That's why I had met those families. (31)

As with Sinem, Serpil talked about maternal concerns, too. She gave an example that on WA, when she saw many messages in different WA groups, the first one would be the WA parent group. She mentions the strong maternal instinct to protect her child form emergencies and the expectation that the WA group would act as the primary source in such situations.

> Now, that is the maternal instinct. Suddenly anxiety gets triggered. You focus on that… For example, when I see 15 unread messages on the WA parent group, oh, I wonder, and I immediately check what happened. My subconscious mind tells me that if I see one or two messages I sense: 'ok, someone asking a question and

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waiting for the answer'. I do not mind because probably I do not know the answer. Let me put it another way; if I see 30 messages on all three groups 'parent', a 'family' and 'friends' WA groups, first I read the message in the family or this parent group. In fact, if I need to sort it more accurately, I check the parent group first because if something important happens in the family, they call me immediately; they do not send a message on WA. (32)

Serpil also added that she does not think that it is always necessarily bad when she sees many messages, but she feels there must be something she needs to do as a mother. She mentioned, "I need to learn immediately what the 'thing' [matter] is." (33)

Figen is another parent who stated that she is not an active parent in the WA groups and cannot follow the group content promptly. She is actually not in favor of these WA groups, but one day something urgent happened. Hot water accidentally got spilled on her daughter and she got burnt at school. She expressed that

I thought I was out of touch [with the school] at this time, and the class mom did not give much information. Then, when I talked to a friend for details, I learned that there was a WA parent subgroup. (34)

She has since been added to this WA parent subgroup; even though it is not something she would like to participate in.

Starting school is a new period with lots of responsibilities for both mothers and children. Children are in a place for long hours without their parents and make contacts with the individuals their parents do not know. These conditions create maternal concerns on how they need to help their children with academic work, what kind of friends they have, or how safe they are at the school. Hence, they try to use WA parent groups to reduce their anxiety. On the other hand, these concerns may increase when they compare themselves with other parents since WA groups are online platforms where parents can directly observe other parents' attitudes related to parental issues.

4.4.3 Making comparisons with other parents

Mothers not only talk about their own parenthood, but also talk about other parents' behaviors and compare themselves to those peers. For instance, Derya said there are 20 children in her daughter's class. Almost all mothers have a university or master's degree but only 5 or 6 of them are working moms. Others prefer being "stay-at-home moms". As a result, they spend most of their time with their children. In the following statement, she explains why she thinks her daughter is the unlucky one "We are working moms. This causes unrest. Her mother does not work; she comes to school all the time. This is what I meant when I said it is a problem for İpek." (35).

She added that her daughter is attending a private school and that she wants her to get scholarships to reduce tuition fees. Hence, she emphasized that her daughter must do her homework and that she must pay more attention to her lessons. As a mother, she feels responsible and somewhat guilty that her daughter cannot focus on her lessons as much as she should. From time to time, she tends to leave her books at school because she doesn't want to do her homework. She thinks that she, as a mother, does not give too much importance to the academic focus of the curricular content because, she believes it is 'just' primary school. She said

> I forgot to say, but also there is a school website. Parents can see the homework or announcements from there, too. In fact, it is quite an effective system, we can learn everything from there, but I can't look at the announcement there, either. Maybe just at the weekends. Actually, I am an unfocused parent.… There are mothers who make their children take private lessons, they are in contact with the school all the time; they even call the teacher constantly to talk. (36)

Buket talked about the parents she thinks are very ambitious and criticized some

of their behaviors. She said what she desires for her own children is different from the

objectives of many other parents. She stated:

> For example, there is a mom: I think she is so ambitious. Her son goes to basketball training 3 days a week and 5 days a week to something else. And this mom sent her son to Marmaris for 3 weeks, on a basketball camping trip. This sent shivers down my spine. A 7-year-old child should not be interrupted the trust and compassion relationship from his parents. I mean, I cannot even imagine my son sleeping in the same hotel room with a stranger – a little child! Very little! In 3 weeks, anything can happen. It was not only a 7-year-old group, for instance there are also children that are 13-14 years old. Why did this child go to this camp? Because his mom wants him to get a competition license. He is just seven years old; he cannot make these kinds of plans for himself. When the mom talked about this issue, she was so focused on the goal, she seemed extremely competitive. (37)

On the other hand, she expressed what she expects from her own children:

> Let them develop an interest themselves, a desire for a dignified life – become conscientious adults; so that I can entrust them with themselves. In my plans for them, there is no journey for a Nobel prize in London, or sending them to NASA, or do this or do that. (38)

Making comparisons with other moms sometimes creates guilt for mothers, but

also, they observe and criticize other mothers who have different values or goals while

raising their children. Overall, the three sub-themes have a commonality in that all of

them manifest the WA as a channel for the participants to exhibit and compare their

values and concerns related to parenthood.

4.5   Theme 5: Drawbacks of being a member of WA parent groups

Being a member of a WA parent group also has drawbacks according to many participants. There are three sub-themes that emerged in this theme: a) loss of time and energy because of WA parent groups, b) miscommunication among parents through WA groups, and c) lack of privacy of children on WA parent groups.

4.5.1   Loss of time and energy because of WA parent groups

Talking in the WA groups altogether causes a loss of time and sometimes psychological energy for parents. Discussing online as a whole group results in the decision-making to become more difficult. It also increases the number of messages being sent within the group. Buket mentioned that even when they were choosing a place to have breakfast with other parents, it took hours of planning because everyone contributes to the plan. She said "'…no, this place is expensive.' 'Not this one, that is far away.' excuses. You cannot make anyone happy in the group." (39).

Nazmiye also reported:

> …for example, I check my WA account, there are 100-110 messages in the parent group. Sometimes it is hard to read all of them. And it feels like some messages are unnecessary. I'm swiftly crawling through the messages to see if there's anything that concerns me. (40)

Fatma said "sometimes it is the case that I delete around 500 messages." (41). She didn't clean the group chat because, she explained, she gains important information like exam dates; but also, she does not want her children to see all of the conversation in these WA parent groups. Also, Fatma added:

There are many photos coming in. Sometimes this content can fill the memory of the mobile device. So much so…   You find that you need to delete the photos that do not include your own children. Sometimes I don't have the heart to delete these; the following day or later, my child will talk about friends. Now, I do not delete the collective photos ever. It does not matter if my child is in these images or not. But I erase photos of other children taken alone. Because they fill up the memory. (42)

In addition to what other parents stated above, Figen reported how they reacted to unnecessary messaging and how she felt about these messages.

There are unnecessary conversations. For example, if someone falls ill, every parent says, 'get well soon'. In the end, we complained that we are working people, and I was actually one of these people who complained. For example, unnecessary topics were raised which had absolutely nothing to do with the school. They were annoying. [Our complaints were expressed] in order to prevent these things. (43)

A few parents mentioned that they put a lot of thought into messages when they write something in the WA parent group and sometimes discussed it with their husbands before sending the messages. They may even consider carefully how other parents may react. For instance, Meryem explained

Yes, I started this group, but I stay at the background, I have to always abstain from commenting while others continue to write in the group. This is because when I contribute or say something, I tend to be quite sensitive. If someone misunderstands something I have written in a message to the group or someone says something to me, I tend to become very upset. It plays on my mind for weeks and I ask myself why that happened. (44)

All these excessive messages, trying to make common decisions, and caring too much about the reactions of other parents, result in loss of time and energy. Also, it seems like miscommunications between parents through WA groups also contribute to loss of time and energy.

4.5.2 Miscommunication among parents through WA groups

Every parent gave examples of miscommunication on WA parent groups. Some of them happened because of lack of body language in online written communication. Derya explained her experiences on how a parent misunderstood what she had said and then she never talked to her again.

> It was a misunderstanding situation on a debate about forgetting a sweatshirt. It was a totally unnecessary argument. As a matter of fact, it was I who was the origin of the miscommunication. One sentence was misunderstood by the other mother. I said, 'congratulations' because she sent a response like: 'my child never forgets.' But I really appreciated it that she said her child never forgets. I really like how she was able to teach her child this… but because there are no gestures on WA chats, it can quite easily be perceived differently. As a result of this, the mother perceived my original message as if I had [sarcastically] said, "wow, good for you! well-done!". Then, she overreacted by saying: 'it is your child's responsibility.' Even though I said, 'I think you misunderstood', she didn't respond. She didn't answer. Then, I called her, but she did not answer my call, but her attitude was so wrong that I didn't contact her at all ever again because of this wrong attitude. (45)

Fatma agreed that sometimes parents may get offended simply over a single word or comment. For instance, one of the parents in the group said they had a problem with the organization of a parent meeting, and she expected every parent to respond and attend because there were parents who did not show up at the previous meetings. Then, it sounded like the problem was because of parents who did not come to meetings. As a result of this misunderstanding, she found that she had to offer an additional explanation to make herself clear about this issue. Fatma said "In my opinion, because face-to-face communication is not established on WA groups, the written messages can be understood as much as the other party can understand. And failures can occur." (46).

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Meryem is another parent who was misunderstood in the WA parent group, but she couldn't do anything about the miscommunication of what she had wanted to say. She even confessed that she still could not understand how the misunderstanding had happened. Meryem wanted to buy gifts for children who had learned how to write and read by the end of the year. The school celebrates first graders by organizing an event. Then, she said she called the teacher to ask for permission to organize an event to that effect. The teacher said it was fine as an idea but told her that it would be better if every child gets some type of recognition for personal achievement. She consequently wrote this proposal in the WA parent group. However, she said that one of the parents replied supporting it as being a brilliant idea adding that the teacher deserved the praise because she had taught their children how to read. All of a sudden, the event turned into a task focusing on purchasing a present for the teacher. In the end, the parents collectively ended up buying a garland for the teacher. She told how she had to explain this situation to her son in the following statement:

> Look, my son. It happened like that. It will be as if you as the students got this present for the teacher. He said, okay mom, but you get me one anyway. I said, okay, I will buy you one later, not a problem. Yes, the present was given to the teacher. This was also misunderstood in the group. (47)

4.5.3 Lack of privacy of children on WA parent groups

Many parents complained about most of the other parents sharing private information about children in these groups. Such confidential information may include a child's illness, their study habits, or a problem between two children. As a result, a wide range of sensitive details regarding individual children become public knowledge within the group – and most likely outside the group. Nazlı elaborated on this very issue:

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…for example, another child had an argument with my child. On that day, during the same evening, in the group 'he did this, she did that…' comments were posted. It is so wrong. [There is] no need for every parent in the class to be informed [of the details of this argument]. This is something that may be discussed privately. (48)

Fatma also mentioned parents in their WA group who started to talk about children's problems by giving children's names. Then, a few parents reacted to these parents.

Çağla is the most sensitive parent to report on this issue. She stated,

Saying in the group: 'my child forgot his book, s/he didn't take his homework, s/he did not write this' and so on, also are private information about children, I think. Another case of private information shared in the group is, if a child has diarrhea and will be absent from school; or even 'we have a doctor's appointment today, my child uses cortisone.' This is absurd for me. (49)

Then, she gave examples on this subject and showed how it is possible to make assumptions about these children.

For example, a parent said that her child cries a lot while doing homework, scribbles in his notebook or breaks something. After that, another parent confessed that her child went to school without doing any homework for the entire first semester. And her child says, 'I'm stupid.' This child doesn't do anything unless the teacher tells him/her.' Well, maybe it's a psychological thing. I would never do that. I mean, perhaps I shouldn't say never, but I don't want to. These things happen. I mean, they share these because of their maternal instincts; but when I see that child, I say 'uhm, s/he is just like that'. I don't think it's right to expose the children too much. In general, the idea is that with some parents, I do not distinguish between primary school and university graduates; but parents who feel that they do not have a private life are not aware of their children's life, their private life. I feel like I'm telling someone unrelated about arguments I may have at home with my husband. (50)

Besides many functions of WA parent groups, they also have many costs as explained above. Miscommunication between parents and the issues resulted from lack of children's privacy on these groups add to the loss of time and energy of parents due to WA. Online communication, as the parents said, is different from face-to-face

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communication because of lack facial expressions or word accent, and it is easier to

misunderstand each other. Also, sharing private information of the children on the group

may cause problems that have to be solved later on. All of these interactions between

parents take away their time and energy.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section of the thesis, the discussion of the research results is presented. Implications for school counselors, teachers and school administrators, and families as well as implications for further research are given. At the end of this chapter, strengths and limitations of the study are also discussed.

5.1 Discussion

This study provides insights into the experiences in parental WA school groups through the perspectives of parents. Participants, as parents, are the mothers in this study because mothers are the active members of these WA parent groups and as Brooks et al. (1997) asserted, most school-related responsibilities of children are handled by mothers when the child gets to school age.

Most of the WA parent groups do not include teachers. In the WA group in which both teacher and parents can send messages, the teacher sets down the rules beforehand. In a way, teachers step back from setting up these groups. They either encourage class moms to set up WA groups by themselves or they set up groups to use only for sending announcements and information, through disabling the 'reply' option within the chat group, so that parents are unable to reply to group announcements. This phenomenon resembles the "expert model" of Hornby in parental involvement where the teacher is detached and solely gives information to parents (Hornby, 2011).

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On the other hand, parents started to set up their own groups. Some of these groups are set up by class moms with the encouragement of teachers; some of them by parents with leadership skills, and some of them by parents who need to keep in contact with other parents. Since to the knowledge of the author of this study there is no previous research on relations between parents, it seems like all existing literature is based on the relations between parents and schools. The WA application, as a new technological development, has created an online platform for parents to be in contact with each other.

The parents whose common focus is their children, do not usually know each other before getting together in parental communities. In fact, many social media tools like the WA application bring unacquainted individuals together based on shared interests and it is not surprising that they have become a daily part of users because they provide people with the tools of interactive communication (Ellison, 2007).

The information received through this study suggests that numerous parents in classrooms are part of the WA parent groups because they want to be included. The reason that a parent might leave a group could be because there have been arguments in the past. Also, they reported having many different WA groups apart from the school groups and that this application is a major part of their daily lives. In fact, this situation may explain why the application is so common in schools. Even though the school has a good online system to contact parents, some parents prefer to be informed by the WA group instead, since they are already frequently online there. This makes sense according to the Technological Acceptance Model which points out to the ease of use (Davis, 1989).

Epstein defines six types of parental involvement in her theory and findings relate to three of those types. As explained in the findings section, requesting and sharing information are two major functions of WA parent groups. The observable need parents have to attain information related to school suggests the possibility of lack of communication between schools and parents. Especially parents who have young children in primary schools have a hard time getting proper information from their own children and therefore need to get information from the teacher or school management. Epstein's suggestions for the "communicating" type of parental involvement are conferences with every parent at least once a year or a regular schedule of useful memos or phone calls (Epstein et al., 2002). Such traditional communication methods currently exist and are actively used by schools in Turkey.

The current study suggests that the means, methods, and channels of communication currently employed might be more suitable for families with older students, who can take their own responsibilities for school tasks, assignments, and extracurricular engagements. However, based on the information from this study, it seems that such methods of communication might not be as effective or sufficient for the parents whose children are in primary schools. They need information from school more often and seek immediate responses, being equally as true for home to school communication. When they cannot satisfy their informational need from the teacher or the school, they communicate with other parents through an online community to get the information they feel they need.

Although Epstein et al. (2002) clearly distinguishes between the policies on the responsibility of teachers giving information on homework and how to monitor

schoolwork at home in "supporting learning at home" type, the current study showed that some parents receive this information from other parents who tend to visit school more often in person and communicate that information through WA parent groups. This phenomenon can be interpreted in many ways.

The initial interpretation could be that teachers do not show enough willingness or effort to include parents in school activities; they simply provide information to the parents who physically visit the school or make an effort to be included in the school procedures. Also, parents such as working mothers who have fewer opportunities to visit schools in person have a chance to become involved in their children educational process thanks to other parents with whom they share the same online community. They can, therefore, help their children do homework or curriculum-related activities. As Hornby and Lafaele (2011) mentioned; although there is a considerable diversity in the types of parental involvement, the current situation focuses more on a one-direction flow of support from schools to parents. It may even be asserted that teachers have the same technological tools to communicate with parents easily, but employ the technology to gain more support from parents, rather than choosing to use it to support the parents more.

Participants in this study do not describe parents to be actively included in the decision-making processes of the schools, although there are parent teacher associations in the schools. School principals and the teachers in the classrooms are viewed as authoritarian leaders. On the other hand, parents who create an online community and have contact with each other try to initiate decisions on subjects they are uncomfortable with. Through this online community, they can reach a consensus to influence the

implementation or changes in school rules or policies. Unity gives them power. As a whole group, they become able to express complaints about cold meals or too much homework to the administrators. Being a part of "decision-making" is also what Epstein suggests in her theory for parental involvement, but her suggestions are for school administrators and teachers (Epstein et al., 2002). On the other hand, the findings of the study point out that this informal organization through WA parent groups might push schools to give parents a voice in school decisions.

These may seem to be small steps, but it is evident that parents have a new social platform for collaboration and online communication. They have the ability to act together to make a change in their children's school lives. As a result, students may feel that their rights are protected. Parents can feel that they are making an impact on their child's education and they can share their experiences with other families. Moreover, WA might be allowing teachers to be aware of the families' perspectives on school policies and decisions; a process similar to what Epstein describes in her model (Epstein et al., 2002).

It can be said that although schools may make attempts to increase parental involvement to varying degrees, WA parents try actively to involve themselves in their children's educational process through the online community by creating a forum of collaboration. The participants of this study were parents who can afford to have smartphones and the internet connection for their mobile devices. Many of them send their children to private schools and they may want to have some active involvement in their children's education to be certain that they are getting what they pay for. As well-educated middle and upper-middle class parents, they take an interest in their children's

education. On the other hand, past research shows that as Barnett (2016) mentioned, parents with a low SES level do not feel comfortable with technology, whereas high-income families use technology as an ordinary part of their daily lives. Thus, the experiences of parents from different SES levels might be differentiated in terms of parental involvement in a school which relies on technology to communicate with the parents. Moreover, having technology alone is not necessarily enough to use it effectively; individuals must also have skills and the competence to use it. As Van Dijk (2005) said, these skills primarily depend on the level of education. If well-educated and middle and high- income parents take action instead of schools by using their material access to and competency in technology to get involved in educational settings, how the equality between parents from different SES levels in terms of parental involvement can be provided needs to be considered.

It is not so easy to make decisions or reach a consensus – especially on a digital platform – where participants are only giving momentary focus to the content and context of issues which are raised. Users may suffer from an overload of information and excessive communication which, in turn leads to loss of time and energy (Shokouyar, Siadat & Razavi, 2018). This can be seen in the interviews through complaints about late hour messages or the vast number of sent messages.

Hence, it can be asserted that to take advantage of technology, which also comes with some disadvantages, parents should set rules and limitations about timing, context, and management of the group as Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) suggested. The current study suggests that the groups who make these kinds of rules are viewed to be managed more successfully. Especially mothers who also have older children, stated

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that when the WA application was first launched, management of the groups generated more problems in those years. Problems may arise because of not knowing how to manage this technological tool. Recent studies show similar results that how and by whom the tools are managed, who initiates the process and which limitations and rules should be set are all important factors in order to properly use new age digital communication tools (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019; Flowers, 2015; Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017).

Miscommunication through online platforms is another problem resulting from WA parent groups. Parents set up these groups predominantly at the beginning of the semester without having any information about one another. During the interviews, they even say that other parents are registered in their phone list as this/that child's mother. Not knowing each other and communicating on a platform without body language or facial expressions increases the risks of miscommunication. It is suggested that misunderstandings occur more often in WA parent groups in which all parents are included, than in WA parent subgroups which are set up by parents who already know each other in person. It may be concluded that organizing face-to-face meetings and arranging activities to get to know one another helps to avoid misunderstandings during online communication.

The current research also suggests that WA parent groups help form relations between parents. They set up WA parent subgroups with whom they feel close to, or with the mothers of their children's close friends. Through these subgroups, they organize activities as mentioned above. On the other hand, this process can cause other problems as a result of seeing each other more frequently. It is satisfying and convenient

for mothers who have busy lives to meet their need of friendship while taking care of their children through WA parent groups. Yet, when parents as new friends have problems with each other, this affects children's relations. Children sometimes lose their best friends. There is no research on parent interrelations within the academic literature in the English language to the best of the author's knowledge, but research is evidently essential in investigating what the limitations or boundaries between parents' relations are in order to protect children's relations and maintain the peaceful atmosphere they have in the schools.

As explained in the findings section of this thesis, parents talked about parenthood and motherhood. They compared themselves with other parents during the interviews. Some parents feel a sense of guilt because they do not have more time for their children and interacting with the school as other mothers may have. Some of them criticize other mothers for only focusing on being a mother and not having anything else in their lives except for their own children. They also criticize other mothers for being too competitive and seeing their children as projects. In this century, new motherhood has high standards for women according to Vincent et al. (2010). Mothers experience worries about being insufficient at raising their own children appropriate to modern social standards (Vincent et al, 2010).

WA parent groups as open groups to all parents possess the risk of leading to questioning of one's motherhood because when a child misbehaves in the classroom, this in turn, can be relayed in the groups. It both results in the lack of a child's privacy and also the shaming of a mother simply because of how she raised her child. Technology that transmits necessary information from school to parents so fast is also

able to spread unwanted information between parents. This situation which creates conflicts between parents may also make mothers assume that they are insufficiently qualified to raise their children. Once again, group rules and how to manage WA parent groups gain more importance in avoiding parental concerns. If parents make an agreement on not sharing private issues on a parent group, the fully intended purpose of the group may work well. On the other hand, something as simple as one mother seeing another mother with the culinary skills to cook amazing cookies in the shape of pi number for "Pi Day Organization" may lead her to feel self-insufficiency in lacking a skill that she perceives as being important or as an admired attribute.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Implications for teachers and school administrators

Teachers who do not prefer being in the WA parent groups should understand the intricate dynamics of these groups because as long as what happens in the classrooms affect the dynamics of WA parent groups, parent groups also affect the atmosphere of the classroom. These groups have become new social platforms to form relationships between parents and children as the study has shown. Teachers and school administrators should be aware that the communication between parents can go far beyond what they can imagine. The topics covered in the WA groups appear to be the consequences of all interactions relayed from all parties involved in the education of children. Teachers should refrain from seeing WA groups as a threat. Instead, they could make use of them as a guide for reflecting on their practice and understanding the complicated needs of parents and students.

The current research also gives clues as to what school administrators are lacking in terms of communication with the parents. Parents need to be more informed in order to increase their involvement. WA group experiences in this study signal that parents need more and clear information from schools because they might be trying to make up for that lack of communication through WA interactions. There sure is a need to form networks to be informed about the school. Moreover, school administrators should also be more active in terms of communicating with the parents. They need to create face-to-face or online platforms where parents can share their concerns with the school administrations and teachers, instead of just receiving a one-way communication.

5.2.2   Implications for school counseling practitioners

School counseling practitioners need to recognize the role that online communication via chat clients such as the WA application plays in the field of education. They should not ignore the dynamics of the online interactions between parents, children, and even teachers.

The current study shows miscommunications and problems between parents can have effects on students' relations. It is crucial to understand relations between parents because misunderstandings, when recognized by a counselor, will mean that problems may well be defused quickly. It may be suggested for school counselors to have group meetings with the parents to understand the dynamics of relations between them and make parents know each other face-to-face instead of just online communications. Depending on the capacity and number of personnel in the counseling service, school counselors can also try to take steps in enhancing their function in communicating with

the parents. As much as limited resources allow them, they should focus on communicating with the parents not only after problems occur, but also through routine communications with them during the school year.

5.2.3   Implications for families

Many parents have a WA school parent group as the WA application is widely used in educational settings. Results from the experiences of parents in this study may guide families to set rules of online behavior in these groups in order to avoid conflicts that stem from lack of understanding of other parents' perspectives.

Also, this study may give families a deeper understanding of how the relations between parents have critical effects on their children's relations and well-being. They should reflect on the boundaries of their relations with other parents and online behavior on WA parent groups not to give harm to their children's relations. The study also will inspire families as to be more careful about the private information they share with other parents about their children. Lastly, families, as they take action to advocate for the rights of their children in the schools, can use WhatsApp groups as a source of power and unity, but doing so also has some drawbacks as to affect all relationships, and sometimes in inadvertent ways.

5.2.4 Implications for further research

WA parent groups are quite common in schools. These groups are a part of the daily life of parents, but there has been no research on this subject until now. This study suggests more research on this subject from the different perspectives of school partners; that is, the perspectives of fathers, students, teachers, administrators, and other direct influential roles in a child's education, to gain a more comprehensive understanding about integrating this new technological application into the educational environments.

Quantitative research is also needed on this topic in order to understand the influence of WA groups on parents' lives. Based on the themes of this study, a questionnaire could be developed that aims to measure the satisfaction level of parents with WA groups and the functionality of this type of modality. It is recommended that, if ethical permissions are taken, the content of a WA parent group can be analyzed to understand the actual dynamics of the online interactions in real-life.

This study suggests conducting more research on relationships between parents who gain more contact, at least through technological developments, than they used to. It is also important to understand how these parental relations affect children's school lives.

5.3 Strength and limitations of the study

The strength of this study is that it is an effort to offer an understanding of parent groups which are in continuous contact through instant messaging; a topic that has not been empirically studied before. This study also points out to another gap in the literature. More emphasis is needed on the importance of relations between parents.

In order to interpret the results, it is important to recognize the limitations of the study. It is a qualitative study which is not aimed at making generalizations. Fourteen mothers shared their own parental experiences of instant group messaging with the researcher. Also, results are only from the perspectives of mothers as parents. Students, fathers, teachers, and school managers who are also affected by WA parent groups could not be included in this study. One reason for that limitation was an on-going dominance of mothers in the WA groups.

In addition to these, 11 participants have male children, whereas only three participants have female children. If the sex differences in the behavior of children are considered, the results of the study may be affected by this issue. In total, participants have 22 children in various ages. However, for the purposes of the study, the experiences of participants related to only their children in the primary schools were focused on. This could have limited the participants to give examples from only their primary school experiences; whereas, they actually could have formed their impressions earlier from other school levels, too. The experience level of the participants also might have affected the findings. Those parents who have less experience with online groups might have been more overwhelmed and resentful due to their inexperience with online communications.

Most of the participants were interviewed in March and April which is a close date to April 23, National Sovereignty and Children's Day. Hence, the main subject of the groups was the preparation and organization of the linked events. It is a big day for primary schools in Turkey and many different shows are organized in which parents have many responsibilities in making sure their children are ready for the shows. Hence,

it increases the frequency of messages during those periods. This situation may also have had effects on the results of the study especially in terms of strengthening the subtheme "loss of time and energy because of the WA parent groups" and formation of the subtheme of "discussions about special occasions".

5.4   Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the experiences of parents who are members of WA parent groups in primary schools and how they reflect on their experiences in terms of the communication between schools and parents and among parents, and the influence of those communications on other relationships. Based on the qualitative analysis of parental experiences with instant group messaging, this study has shown that WA parent groups may result in some drawbacks in the lives of parents and students; but the necessity of the WA parent groups is beyond dispute from the perspective of parents.

This online community interacting via the WA application has a major functional role in parents' lives. These groups make it possible for parents to become acquainted with one another, get to know their children friends' families, act together in challenging or questioning school policies, teachers, or even their own children. While parental involvement is ensured through this online social platform, parents get support from each other. Hence, it seems as though they will continue to be a part of educational settings. It can be concluded that if the WA parent groups are managed well by reaching a consensus on group rules, it could be quite an effective tool for parents in primary schools in both improving the communication between parents and enhancing information flow to and from parents.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

	Name of the mother	Education level	Working/ Housemaker	Number of children	Sex and grade of children	Type of school
1	Ayşe	University	Working	2	Male / Preschool Male / 4th grade	Private school
2	Buket	University	Working	1	Female / 3rd grade	Private school
3	Çağla	University	Housemaker	1	Male / 1st grade	Public school
4	Derya	University	Working	1	Male /3rd grade	Private school
5	Emel	High School	Housemaker	1	Male/1st grade	Public school
6	Fatma	University	Working	2	Male/5th grade Female/ 3rd grade	Public school
7	Figen	University	Working	2	Male / high school Female / 1st grade	Public school
8	Hayal	University	Working	2	Male/ 1st grade Female / 4 years old	Public school
9	Melike	University	Working	2	Female / 7th grade Male /1st grade	Private school
10	Meryem	University	Housemaker	1	Male /1st grade	Private school
11	Nazlı	High School	Housemaker	2	Female /7th grade Male/ 1st grade	Public school

12	Nazmiye	University	Working	1	Male / 4th grade	Public school
13	Serpil	University	Working	2	Male / 8th grade Male/ 3rd grade m	Private school
14	Sinem	University	Housemaker	2	Male /1st grade Female / 9 months old	Private school

APPENDIX B

THE ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR MASTER AND PHD THESES IN SOCIAL

SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES ACCEPTANCE FORM

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
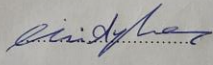**Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu**

Sayı: 2019-16   7 Mart 2019
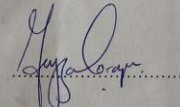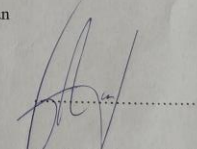
Hacer Ocak

Eğitim Bilimleri
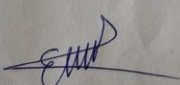
Sayın Araştırmacı,
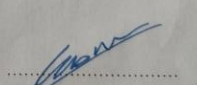
"Okul WhatsApp Grupları: Ebeveynlerin Anlık Grup Mesajlaşma Deneyimleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2019/23 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 7 Mart 2019 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İnci Ayhan

Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı   Doç. Dr. Mehmet Yiğit Gürdal

Doç. Dr. Ebru Kaya   Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şebnem Yalçın

APPENDIX C

INVITATION LETTER- IN ENGLISH

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESERACH PROJECT ON
WHATSAPP GROUP MESSAGING EXPERINCE OF PARENTS

Research Title: WhatsApp School Groups: A Study of Parental Experiences With
Instant Group Messaging

My name is Hacer Ocak and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Social Sciences at
Boğazici University.

I am conducting research on how parents experience the school WhatsApp
groups as a part of their daily lives through the perspectives of parents in partial
fulfillment for my Master of Social Sciences degree and I would like to extend an
invitation to you to participate in this research.

If you decide to participate, one or two interviews will be arranged at a time and
place of your convenience. During this interview, I will ask you questions about your
experiences as a member of the parent WhatsApp group. I would like to know more
about what you like and do not like about being in these groups, and how the
communication between parents through WhatsApp groups is. This interview will take
approximately 1 hour (but this depends on how much you have to say). There are no
right or wrong answers. What is important are your opinions. After the interview, I may
contact you once more in order to clarify certain points.

I will collect some personal data from you such as your name, age, educational
background. The information will be kept private and confidential. You will be given a
false name and your identifiable information will never be used in a publication or
presentation. I will not pass on your details to any organization or company. This is a
research for academic purposes and is not connected with any institutions except
Boğazici University.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to
withdraw from the research at any time or to not answer questions that you do not feel
comfortable answering.

If you have any further questions about the research, please feel free to contact
me via email at hacerocak@gmail.com or on my mobile at 05068429941.

Thank you,

Hacer Ocak.

APPENDIX D

INVITATION LETTER IN TURKISH

EBEVEYN WHATSAPP GRUP MESAJLAŞMA DENEYİMLERİ
ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA İÇİN DAVET

Araştırma Başlığı: Okul WhatsApp Grupları: Ebeveynlerin Anlık Grup Mesajlaşma
Deneyimleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Adım Hacer Ocak ve Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü'nde yüksek
lisans öğrencisiyim. Yüksek lisans tez araştırması için yaptığım bu çalışmada
ebeveynlerin gözünden günlük yaşamlarının bir parçası haline gelen ebeveyn WhatsApp
grup mesajlaşma deneyimlerini anlamaya çalışacağım. Sizleri bu araştırmaya katılmaya
davet ediyorum.

Araştırmaya katılmaya karar verirseniz, uygun olduğunuz bir zamanda ve yerde
sizinle ihtiyaca göre bir veya iki görüşme düzenlenecektir. Bu röportaj sırasında,
ebeveyn WhatsApp grubunun bir üyesi olarak deneyimleriniz hakkında size sorular
soracağım. Bu gruplarda neleri sevip neleri sevmediğiniz konularında ya da WhatsApp
grupları aracılığıyla diğer ebeveynlerle kurduğunuz iletişimin nasıl olduğu hakkında
daha fazla bilgi edinmek istiyorum. Görüşmeler yaklaşık 1 saat sürecektir (bu sizin neler
anlatmak isteyeceğinize de bağlı). Doğru ya da yanlış cevap yoktur. Önemli olan sizin
görüşlerinizin neler olduğudur. Görüşmeden sonra, belli noktaları açıklığa kavuşturmak
için sizinle bir kez daha iletişime geçebilirim.

Sizden adınız, yaşınız, eğitim geçmişiniz gibi bazı kişisel bilgileri toplayacağım.
Bu bilgiler gizli tutulacaktır. Size takma bir ad verilecek ve tanımlanabilir bilgileriniz
asla bir yayında veya sunumda kullanılmayacaktır. Bilgileriniz hiçbir kurum veya
şirkete iletmeyecektir. Bu, akademik amaçlı bir araştırmadır ve Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
dışında hiçbir kurumla bağlantılı değildir.

Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır ve herhangi bir zamanda
araştırmadan çekilmeyi ya da cevap vermekten çekindiğiniz soruları cevaplamamayı
tercih edebilirsiniz.

Araştırma ile ilgili başka sorularınız varsa, lütfen hacerocak@gmail.com mail
adresinden veya 05068429941 numaralı cep telefonundan iletişime geçin.

Teşekkürler,
Hacer Ocak.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH

T.C.

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Research Supporting Institution: Boğaziçi University
Research Title: A Study of Parental Experiences With Instant Group Messaging
Name of the Researcher: Hacer Ocak
Addressee: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, 34342, Bebek/İstanbul
E-mail: hacer.ocak@boun.edu.tr, hacerocak@gmail.com
Mobile Phone number: 05068429941

Dear parent,

Hacer Ocak, a graduate student of the Department of Guidance and Psychology Counseling, Institution of Social Sciences at Boğaziçi University, conducts a scientific research project under the name of "School WhatsApp Groups: A Study of Instant Group Messaging Experiences of Parents".   WhatsApp groups are widely used in schools for parents' communication with each other and teachers. The aim of this study to explore WhatsApp groups messaging experiences of parents through the perspectives of parents. We would like to inform you about the research before your decision to participate.

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be given an hour-long interview at the appropriate time and place for you. The time may vary depending on what you say. During this interview, you will be asked questions about what you experienced as a member of the parent WhatsApp group, how these WA groups affect your relations with the school and other parents. You will be asked for your name, age and education, and this information will be kept confidential. Audio recordings will be taken during the interviews. These audio recordings will only be heard by the researcher Hacer Ocak.

This research is carried out for a scientific purpose and focus on the confidentiality of the participant information. Audio recordings will be stored in the researcher's personal computer during the research project and will be deleted when the

research is completed. If a name should be used in the research report, the pseudonyms will be used.

Participation in this survey is entirely optional. If you participate, at any stage of the study you have the right to take your consent without showing any reason. In addition, the participant has the right not to answer the questions that he / she does not want. No fee will be paid to the research participants and no prize will be given. If you would like to receive additional information about the research project, please contact the researcher Hacer Ocak, whose contact information is above.

All kinds of personal information provided within the framework of the research is guaranteed to be in no way disclosed. Any participant right is protected by Boğaziçi University Ethics Committee and laws. You can direct your complaints to the Boğaziçi University Ethics Committee via sbinarek@boun.edu.tr.

If you agree to participate in this research project, please sign this form.

I, (participant's name) ...., read the text above and I fully understood the scope and purpose of the work I was asked to participate, the responsibilities that I voluntarily took on me. I have had the opportunity to ask any question came to my mind about the study. I understand that I can leave this research study whenever I want and without having to specify any reason and if I leave, I will not encounter any negative attitude.

Under these circumstances, I agree to participate in the research without any pressure or coercion.

I don't want to receive/ I want to receive an instance of the form.

Name and surname of participant:

Signature:

Phone number:

Date (day / month / year): .... /....... /.......

Name of the researcher:

Signature:

Date (day / month / year): …… /....... / ......

INFORMED CONSENT FORM IN TURKISH

T.C.

BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL VE BEŞERI BILIMLER İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETIK KURULU

KATILIMCI BİLGİ ve ONAM FORMU

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın adı: Okul WhatsApp Grupları: Ebeveynlerin Anlık Grup Mesajlaşma
Deneyimleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma
Proje Yürütücüsü/Araştırmacının adı: Hacer Ocak
Adresi: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, 34342,
Bebek/İstanbul
E-mail adresi: hacer.ocak@boun.edu.tr / hacerocak@gmail.com
Telefonu: 05068429941

Sayın Veli,

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Rehberlik ve Psikoloji
Danışmanlık Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Hacer Ocak "Okul WhatsApp Grupları:
Ebeveynlerin Anlık Grup Mesajlaşma Deneyimleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma" adı altında
bilimsel bir araştırma projesi yürütmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı okullarda yaygın bir
iletişim aracı olarak kullanılan, veli-okul ve velilerin birbirleri ile iletişimini sağlayan
ebeveyn WhatsApp gruplarının nasıl deneyimlendiğini velilerin gözünden anlamaya
çalışmaktır. Bu süreçte ebeveyn WhatsApp gruplarının bir parçası olan sizleri
araştırmamıza davet ediyoruz. Kararınızdan önce araştırma hakkında sizi bilgilendirmek
istiyoruz.

Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde size uygun bir saatte ve yerde
sizinle tahminen bir saat süren bir röportaj gerçekleştirilecektir. Sizin neler söylemek
istediğinize, neler anlattığınıza göre süre değişebilir. Bu röportaj sırasında okul
WhatsApp grubunun bir üyesi olarak neler deneyimlediğinize, bu grupların okul ve
diğer velilerle olan iletişiminiz üzerine nasıl etkileri olduğuna dair sorular sorulacaktır.
Size adınız, yaşınız ve eğitim durumunuz sorulacak olup bu bilgiler gizli olarak
tutulacaktır. Röportajlar sırasında ses kaydı alınacaktır. Bu ses kayıtları sadece
araştırmacı Hacer Ocak tarafından dinlenecektir.

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmaktadır ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Ses kayıtları araştırma projemiz süresince araştırmacının kişisel bilgisayarında muhafaza edilip araştırma sona erdiğinde silineceklerdir. Araştırma raporunda isim kullanılması gerektiği takdirde takma isimler kullanılacaktır.

Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Katıldığınız takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında herhangi bir sebep göstermeden onayınızı çekmek hakkına da sahipsiniz. Ayrıca katılımcı istemediği sorulara cevap vermeme hakkına sahiptir. Araştırma katılımcılarına herhangi bir ücret ödenmeyecek, herhangi bir ödül verilmeyecektir. Araştırma projesi hakkında ek bilgi almak istediğiniz takdirde lütfen yukarıda bilgileri verilen araştırmacı Hacer Ocak ile iletişime geçiniz.

Araştırma çerçevesinde verilen her türlü kişisel bilginin hiçbir şekilde açığa çıkmayacağı garantisi verilmektedir. Her türlü katılımcı hakkınız Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Etik kurulu ve yasalar tarafından korunmaktadır. Proje ile ilgili olası şikayetlerinizi Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Etik İnceleme Komisyon'una sbinarek@boun.edu.tr mail adresinden yönlendirebilirsiniz.

Eğer bu araştırma projesine katılmasını kabul ediyorsanız, lütfen bu formu imzalayınız.

Ben, (katılımcının adı) ...., yukarıdaki metni okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkânı buldum. Bu çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuz tutum ile karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum.

Katılımcının Adı-Soyadı:
İmzası:
Telefon No:
Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): …/......./..............

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı:
İmzası:
Tarih (gün/ay/yıl): …. /......./..............

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL IN ENGLISH

Parental Interview Questions

1. What have you experienced as a member of this group so far?

2. Can you evaluate the use of the class WhatsApp group in terms of communication with the school and other parents?

   a. How does it affect your relations with the school?

   b. How does it affect your relations with other parents?

   c. How does it affect feelings? Positively/negatively?

3. What changed for you after becoming a member of the parents' WA group compared to before you were a member?

Follow-up questions that may or may not be asked depending on the flow of the semi-structured interview:

4. Can you tell me about the process of setting up the class WhatsApp group and becoming part of this group?

5. Which method (phone, e-mail, face to face, WhatsApp message, SMS…) do you prefer when communicating with the school? Why is that? Which method does the school expect from you to use while communicating with the school? How do you feel about that?

6. What do you recommend to school managements about parents' WA groups?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL IN TURKISH

Ebeveyn Görüşme Soruları

1. Veli WA gruplarının bir üyesi olarak bugüne kadar neler deneyimlediniz?

2. Okul ve diğer velilerle iletişiminiz açısından sınıf WhatsApp grubu kullanımınızı değerlendirir misiniz?

    a. Okulla olan ilişkinizi nasıl etkiliyor?

    b. Diğer velilerle ilişkinizi nasıl etkiliyor?

    c. Sizi ve duygularınızı olumlu/olumsuz nasıl etkiliyor?

3. WA grubu öncesine kıyasla WA üyesi olduktan sonra sizin için neler değişti?

Görüşmenin ilerleyişine göre sorulabilecek takip soruları:

4. Sınıf WhatsApp grubunuzun kurulma ve sizin bu gruba dahil olma sürecinizi anlatır mısınız?

5. Okul ile iletişim sağlarken hangi yöntemi (telefon, e-mail, yüz yüze, WhatsApp mesajı, SMS …) tercih ediyorsunuz? Neden? Okul sizin hangi yöntemi seçmenizi tercih ediyor? Bununla ilgili duygularınız neler?

6. Okul yönetimlerine velilerin WA gruplarıyla ilgili neler önerirsiniz?

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES OF THE STUDY

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Theme 1: Transmitting information between related parties	1.1.Requests for information on subjects related to school
	1.2. Sharing school news news and other information
Theme 2: Planning and action on subjects in which parents have similar concerns	2.1. Discussions about special occasions
	2.2. Initiating a decision with other parents
	2.3. Collaboration between parents for/against others
Theme 3: Establishing connections between parents	3.1. Parents becoming acquainted
	3.2. Development of relations among all parties
	3.3. Socialization/Friendships among parents through WA parent groups
	3.4. Providing mutual support for one another
Theme 4: Exhibiting parental attitudes and responsibilities through WA	4.1. Moms. vs dads on WA parent groups
	4.2. Maternal concerns about school-aged children
	4.3. Making comparison with other parents
Theme 5: Drawbacks of being a member of WA parent groups	5.1. Loss of time and energy because of WA parent groups
	5.2. Miscommunication among parents through WA parent groups
	5.3. Lack of children's privacy on WA parent groups

PARTICIPANTS' QUOTES IN TURKISH

1. Ödevler mevzusu bir de çok konuşuluyor WA gruplarında. Bazen ödevlerini okulda unutmuş oluyor çocuklar, onun ödevlerini çekip yolluyorlar, ya da sayfa numarası oluyor kitaptan. Onları unutmuş oluyorlar. En çok böyle rutin şeyler konuşuluyor.

2. Geçen ben Ali'yi iki gün okula götürememiştim. 3. Günde Ali okula gitti, tabii geri geldi. 4-5 sayfa ödev gelmiş. Ali'ye soruyorum, şimdi oğlum hangisi yarınki ödevin? En yazından yarınkini yaptıralım. Diğerlerini yavaş yavaş yaparız gibilerinden. Şimdi çocuğun da kafası karışmış ister istemez. Fotoğraflarını çektim, dedim arkadaşlar bugünün ödevi hangisi dedim.

3. Neler olduğunu bilmiyoruz. Mesela bir toplantıya ben katılamıyorum veya bir karne töreni vs.ye gidemediğim oluyor. Oradan fotoğrafları görmek gönderildiğinde onlar hoşuma gidiyor yani veya ihtiyacım olduğunda dediğim gibi bir şey lazım olduğunda bir şey sormak istediğimde onu sorabiliyoruz.

4. Oradan da çocukların o günkü ihtiyaçları, ne bileyim çok saçma gelebilir ama kaybolan bir eşyası için ile onu kullandık.

5. Çocuk eve gidince diyor öğretmenim şunu istedi falan. Veliler de tekrar gruptaki annelere yazıyorlar. Hani sizin çocuklarınız da söyledi mi. Böyle bir şey var mı? Yapılacak bir şey var mı? O şekilde haberleşiyoruz.

6. Öğretmen bazen gördüğü veli ile haber yolluyor.

7. Ödevlerin yanı sıra öğretmenden iletilmesi gereken mesajlar varsa yazılı olarak bunları iletildi yine. Fotoğraf olarak paylaşıldı. Biz de sağlıklı bilgiye eriştik. O bilgileri kullandık. Karne gününde fotoğraflar çekildi, çocuklar bir etkinlik yaptığında fotoğraflar çekildi, bunlar bize iletildi. Öğretmen sınıf içerisinde birtakım problemler gördüyse bunları sınıf annesine aktardı. Sınıf annesi bize iletti.

8. Ben faydalanıyorum açıkçası. Çünkü onların arasında çalışmayan anneler var. Ve çocuklarını çok milim milim takip eden anneler. Benim eve dönüş saatim çok geç olduğu için çocukla ve çocuğun okuluyla ilgili geri bildirimleri doğrudan bu WA grubundan alıyorum. Bazen işte ödevlere ilişkin açıklamalar. Ya da aktivite etkinlikler hakkında detay bilgi.   Okul bununla alakalı bize bir mail gönderiyor olmasına rağmen böyle kafamıza doğan soruların cevaplarını ben o WA grubu annelerinden alıyorum. Çünkü onlar her gün çocuklarını okuldan almaya kendileri gidiyorlar. İşte o gün okul başkanıdır, öğretmendir odur budur onlardan

her gün canlı bildirim alıp bizim WA grubuna yazıyorlar. Bu neticede benim için fiziksel olarak erişemediğim bir yere o anneler kanalıyla bilgi almış bulunuyorum.

9. Ya da çocuk ishal olmuş bugün okula gelemeyecek gibi. Yani bugün kontrolümüz var, yok kortizon kullanıyor.

10. O grupta da 13 veliden 5 kişi toparlanabildik. İşte herkes ben hediyemi aldım falan. Hediye ihalesi de bana kaldı. Şimdi para hiç önemli değil. Arkadaşlar seçelim hediyeyi parayı bir şekilde toplarız. Biz çiçekçiye gidiyoruz bir arkadaşımla beraber çiçeklerin fotoğraflarını çekip yolluyoruz, burası böyle olmasaydı şurası öyle olmasaydı. 10 gün boyunca ben Topkapı'nın Çapa'nın etrafında bütün çiçekçileri dolaştım ve hiçbirini beğenmediler. Çiçek olayımız bitti çikolata olayına girdik. Yok Kahve Dünyası olmasın. Orası olmasın. O 5 kişi inanılmaz derecede…Yani sonrasında hiçbir şekilde artık ben bu işlere karışmak istemiyorum.

11. Şu anda 23 Nisan gösterileri var, yapılacak şeyler için kıyafet alınacaksa mesela onunla ilgili bilgilendirme oluyor. Yani böyle çok cevap yazacağım şeyler değil ama bilgi notları olarak geliyor. Hani oradan cevap yazacağımız bir şey varsa da genelde işte bedenleri, kıyafetleri, kıyafet paraları.

12. İlk başta hepimiz sırayla başlamıştık yani. İlk biz yaptı, sonra diğer veli yaptı. En az 6-7 doğum günü olmuştu.

13. Bence hep birlikte karar verelim.

14. Anneler ortak karar aldıkları için bir çocuk diretse de bakıyor ki diğer çocuk zaten kabullenmiş annesinin kararını. Sorun olmadı yani.

15. Ne kadar indirim yapacaklar? Hepimiz birlik olalım gerekirse hepimiz başka okula gidelim. Böyle bir veli birlikteliği de vardır. WA grubunda konuşuluyor.

16. O dönemde biraz da ona moral olsun diye yazdım ben. Herkes o kadar güzel şey yaptı ki, gelelim falan. Hatta olay kısır gününe döndü. Öğle arasında ayarladık, müdürden de izin aldık. Tabii çocukların da derslerini sekteye uğratmayacak şekilde. Herkes bir şeyler yaptı. Onda da yine ufak bir meblağ para topladık. Ona hediye aldık.

17. Arkadaş bir WA grubu var. İşte bu tamamen veli profili ile ilgili. Ben fenalık geçireceğim buradan çıkmak istiyorum. Yani kültür yok, yazışma yok. Türkçe yok, rezalet yazışmalar. Burada ben küçümsemiyorum yani. Yani şöyle mesela öğretmene şimdi diyecek ki bunu almayalım, diyor ki bu iğrenç öğretmene de şimdi bu alınmaz. Mesela seviye. Ya da çocuğa bir şey söyleyecek. Onun çocuğu böyle, terbiyesiz. Ay onları öyle görünce tabii ben hemen kendimi gruptan

çıkardım. Çocuğumu da aldım okuldan. Babası isterse Cumhurbaşkanı olsun. Çünkü o çocuk ve diğer veliler çocukları zarar verecektir.

18. Esra kızımızın adı. Esra bazen diyor ki nedir anne hep erkek anneleriyle görüşüyorsun. Benim arkadaşlarımın hepsi erkek. Biraz da kızlarla görüş. İşte falan kişiyle görüşebilirsin diyor annesi, onu sevmiyorum diyor. Hani onlarla anlaşamıyorum diyor. Aslında onun da işine geliyor. O da bizim çocuklarla iyi anlaşıyor. Bizim çocuklarda onu şey olarak görmüyorlar. O farklı bir cins falan, cinsiyetçi bir şey yok aralarında.

19. Biz annelerin de ihtiyacı var biraz nefes almaya.

20. Hatta geçen seneki grubun adı Lahmacun grubuydu. Çünkü biz bu grupla lahmacun yemeye falan gidiyorduk. Onla da devam ettik bu sene de. Bu sene yalnız onlar yok anneler devam ediyor.

21. Çocuk aslında acayip birleştiriyormuş. Yani Emre'nin ilkokula başlaması ile birlikte ben de yeni bir çevre oluşturmaya başladım. Farklı bir çevre. Eğitim camiasından farklı bir çevre.

22. Malatya'ya gittik, fotoğraflar paylaşıyoruz. İşte dediğim gibi kendi özel dediğim gibi mesela benim doktor çevrem geniş yazıyor mesela benim kuzenim beyin kanaması geçirdi. Melike tanıdığın var mı? Bu konuda bana yardımcı olabilir misin? Gibi yazılıyor oradan. Hiç kimse de sen niye bunu yazıyorsun böyle yazıyorsun demiyor. Yani karikatür atılıyor, fıkra atılıyor. Pek çocuklar olmuyor artık, tamamen bir dostane grup gibi oldu. Hem çocukların eğitimi ile ilgili hem işte özel hayatlar. Fıkrası, şuyu buyu. Ona itiraz eden de yok. Saat kavramına dikkat eden yok, ramazanda iftarlıklar atılır. İlerletilmiş.

23. Geçen gün sadece bir tane velimiz İngilizce ödevi verilmişti. Bunun siteye girilmesi gerekiyor, girememiş. Biz öğretmene sormuş girmiştik. Ama sanırım kimse sormamış. Ya dedi siz nasıl giriyorsunuz? Ve bu ödevler verileli 1 ay oluyor. Sürekli veriliyor bu ödevler. Kimse yapmamış ödevleri. Sonra ben linki attım, linkten nasıl olması gerektiğini. Yönlendirme oldu, bu tarz şeyler güzel.

24. Benim işim çıktı çocuğumu alır mısın 2 saat sonra geleceğim gibi.

25. İşte bir etkinlik için balon isteniyor. Ben unutmuşum. Diyorum ki ya arkadaşlar fazla gönderen var mı? Ya da evde fazla olan var mı? Göndersin. Yardımlaşma da oluyor.

26. Annelerin çoğu istemedi yani. 16 çocuk var, onu falan istemedi. O yüzden yapmadık.

27. Hayır, benim eşim yok. Öğretmenler günü grubumuzda sadece bayanlar var. Erkeklere gerek duymadık yani.

28. Geride de kalabilirdim ama ben doğduğu andan itibaren hemen hemen her konuda mutlaka işin içinde olmayı isterim. Bir şekilde haberdar olmayı isterim. O nedenle WA grubunda ben bulunmak istedim.

29. Muhtemelen velisi o olduğu için. Tanımıyorum anneyi ama muhtemelen çok yoğun çalışıyor. O yüzden baba görevi üstlenmiş gibi. Ben öyle hissettim. Tanımıyorum.

30. Öncelikle bir anneyim, her şeyden önce.

31. Şimdi ister istemez çocuğunun ağzından bir isim çıktığında ne hissedersin hemen içgüdüsel onun ailesini bir tanıyayım. Kimle görüşüyor? Kimlerle arkadaşlık ediyor? Ya da ben mi çok büyütüyorum anne olmayı bilmiyorum. O yüzden o ailelerle tanışmıştım.

32. O işte annelik içgüdüsü. Hemen endişe tetikleniyor. Hemen ona yoğunlaşıyorsunuz......mesela bakıyorum o grupta 15 tane okunmamış mesaj görsem. Aa acaba ne oldu diye döner bakarım. Ama bilinçaltı ezberim şöyle oluşmuş. 1-2 tane görsem bu şey demek biri soru sordu, ona yanıt verilecektir, bende yanıt olmadığına göre …. Şöyle söyleyeyim aile arkadaşlar ve okul grubunun üçünde de okunmamış 30 mesaj görsem hani hangisine ilk önce bakarım yani aileye ya da bu okul grubuna bakarım. Daha doğrusu sıralamam gerekirse okul grubuna bakarım. Söylediğim gibi ailede akut bir şey gelişse o bana hemen aranırım, haberim olur. Yani akut, olumsuz bir şey gelişirse aranırım.

33. Onun ne olduğunu bir an önce öğrenmem lazım.

34. Ben çok iletişimsiz kaldığımı düşündüm bu sırada. Sınıf annemiz de çok bilgilendirme yapmadı bu sırada. Sonra ben bir arkadaşla konuşunca o alt grubu orada öğrendim.

35. Bizde çalışan anneler olarak… O da huzursuzluk yaratıyor. Onun annesi çalışmıyor, sürekli okula geliyor. Onu demek istemiştim İpek'e sıkıntı diye.

36. Onu söylemeyi unuttum internet sitesi var. Oradan her gün ödevler yükleniyor. Duyurular da orada oluyor. Aslında baya efektif bir pozisyon var orada. Oradan her şeyi öğrenebiliriz ama ben oraya da giremiyorum. Hafta sonundan hafta sonuna belki bakabiliyorum. Pek yoğunlaşamamış bir veliyim aslında. ….. Özel ders aldıran anneler var. Sürekli okulla iletişim halindeler. Öğretmeni hani sürekli arayıp görüşen anneler var.

37. Mesela bir anne bana çok oldukça hırslı geliyor ve onun çocuğu haftada 3 gün baskete 5 gün antrenmanı bilmem ne onu bunu yapıp çocuğu 7 yaşındayken Marmaris'e 3 haftalık basketbol kampına göndermiş. Tüylerim diken diken oldu

benim. 7 yaşındaki bir çocuğun anne babayla güven şefkat ilişkisinin bu kadar kesilmesini hiç doğru bulmuyorum. Yani ben onu düşündükçe oğlumun bir otel odasında yabancı bir kişiyle uyudu uyandı. Küçük bir çocuk. Çok küçük. 3 hafta, her şey gelir başına. Sadece 7 yaş grubu değil mesela, 13-14 yaşlarda var. Neden bu çocuk oraya gitti? Annesi onun lisans almasını istiyor. Tahmin etmiyorum oğlan 7 yaşında böyle bir plan yapamaz ki. Annenin bunu anlatırken ki şeyi böyle hedefe odaklanmış, yarışçı şeyi çok.

38. Kendilerinin onurlu bir yaşam arzusu olan, kendisi bunu istiyor olsun. Vicdanlı yetişkinler olsun. Ben onları kendilerine emanet edebileyim. Benim onlarla ilgili planlarımda işte gitsin Londra'da Nobel alsın NASA'ya gitsin, onu yapsın bunu yapsın yok.

39. Yok işte fiyatı pahalı, yok işte yeri uzak falan gibi bahaneler. İşte kimseyi memnun edemiyorsunuz.

40. Mesela bir açıp bakıyorum 100-110 mesaj geliyor. Onları okumak bazen zor geliyor. Ve gereksiz geliyor da bazı şeyler. Böyle hızlıca tarıyorum hani beni ilgilendiren bir durum var mı diye.

41. Bazen oturup 500'e yakın ileti sildiğim oluyor benim.

42. Çok fotoğraf geliyor. Bazen hafızayı bile doldurabiliyor. Yani o derece…...Onlarda da çocuğunuzun olmadığı fotoğrafları siliyorsunuz. Bazen de kıyamıyorum, öbür gün falan çocuğum arkadaşlarından bahsedecek. Zaten toplu fotoğrafları hiç silmiyorum. Oğlum olsa da olmasa da. Ama bire bir tek çekilmiş fotoğrafları siliyorum. Dolduruyorlar çünkü hafızayı.

43. Gereksiz konuşmalar oluyor. Mesela biri hasta oluyor, geçmiş olsun deniyor. Sonuçta çalışan insanlarız diye şikâyette bulunduk, bunların içinde ben de vardım aslında. Mesela okul dışı gereksiz yazışmalarda oluyordu, onlar da rahatsız edici. Onlara da engel olmak adına.

44. Evet grubu kurdum fakat insanlar yazıyor ama ben hep çekimser kalıyorum kalmak zorunda kalıyorum çünkü bir şeyler söylüyorum ben de çok hassasım. Bir şeyi yanlış anlaşıldığımda ya da bana karşı bir şey geldiğinde çok üzülüyorum. Onu haftalarca bazen kafamda neden böyle oldu diyen bir insanım.

45. Eşofman üstü ile ilgili unutulmasıyla ilgili bir tartışma olan, yanlış anlaşılan bir durum oldu. Çok gereksiz. Orijinde de ben vardım aslında. Bir cümlem yanlış anlaşıldı diğer anne tarafından. Ooo çok güzel tebrik ederim demiştim. Çocuğum hiç unutmuyor gibi bir cümle kurmuştu. Ama gerçekten takdir etmiştim çocuğum hiç unutmuyor deyince. Ben de harika nasıl becerdiniz gibi gerçekten… ama yazışma üslubunda mimikler ve jestler olmadığı için farklı algılanabiliyor. Dolayısıyla anne de aa bravo sana ne güzel gibi algıladı. Sizin çocuğunuzun sorumluluğunda gibi sert bir çıkış yaptı.   Galiba yanlış anladınız

dememe rağmen olayı orada kesti. Cevap da vermedi. Aradım açmadı ama yaptığı tavır o kadar yanlıştı ki ben yaptığı bu yanlış tavır yüzünden onla zaten artık hiçbir şekilde irtibata geçmedim.

46. Çünkü bence WA gruplarında yüz yüze sesle iletişim kurulmadığı için yazılan sözü nereye gittiği de karşı taraf ne kadar anlarsa oluyor. Ve arızalar çıkabiliyor yani.

47. Oğlum bak dedim bu şekilde oldu. Öğretmene siz almışsınız gibi olacak. Tamam dedi ama sen yine de bana al. Tamam dedim ben sana sonrasında yine alırım, sıkıntı değil. Evet, öğretmene verildi. İşte bu da WA grubunda yanlış anlaşıldı.

48. Mesela benim çocuğumla biri kavga etmiş hemen akşamında o ona bunu yapmış o şunu yapmış. Çok yanlış bir hareket. Herkesin bilmesine gerek yok, özelden yazışılabilir.

49. Yani WA grubunda da kitabını unutmuş, ödevini almamış, bunu yazmamış gibi şeyler ama onlar da özel bence. Ya da çocuk ishal olmuş bugün okula gelemeyecek gibi. Yani bugün kontrolümüz var, yok kortizon kullanıyor. Bana saçma geliyor yani.

50. Mesela bir veli şey demişti ödev yaparken çok ağlıyor, defterini karalıyor bir şeyleri kırıyor. Ondan sonra bir velide şey demişti ilk dönem hiç ödev yapmadan okula gitmiş çocuğu. İşte ben aptal bir çocuğum diyormuş. Öğretmen yap dedikçe yapmıyormuş falan gibi. Aslında belki psikolojik bir şey bu. Ben bunu asla yapmam yani. Yani asla demeyeyim ama yapmayı istemem. Böyle şeyler olabiliyor. Yani o da ne kadar da olsa anne içgüdüsüyle paylaşıyor ama ben o çocuğu gördüğümde aaa o da böyleymiş hımmm diyorum. Çocukları çok ifşa etmenin doğru olmadığını düşünüyorum. Genel olarak da fikrim bazı veliler ilkokul üniversite mezunu diye de ayırmıyorum ama çok kendini özel hayatı olmadığını hisseden veliler çocuklarının hayatının, özel hayatı olduğunun farkında değiller. Şey gibi düşünüyorum benim evde eşimle tartışmamı birine anlatmam gibi geliyor.

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