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## **DETERMINING PRIMARY EDUCATION TEACHERS' FIRST READING AND WRITING TEACHING SELF-EFFICACY PERCEPTIONS: FACTORS OF SELF-REGULATION AND DISTANCE EDUCATION\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions, and the factors of self-regulation and distance education. Because, it is thought that it is important to determine the teachers' self-efficacy of teachers for the effective implementation of primary reading and writing teaching, to enable teachers with self-regulatory learning skills to organize the students' learning environments of students, and to use distance education for teachers today. The sample of this study consists of 350 primary education teachers who worked in 10 primary schools at Erzurum in Turkey during the 2021-2022 academic year. Diversity in terms of schools, gender, seniority, and educational level of the teachers was considered while selecting the teachers who participated in the study. A Relational scanning design was used in this descriptive study. This study employed a correlational survey design, a quantitative research method to examine the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions, and the factors of self-regulated learning skills and distance education. "Primary Literacy Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale", "Self-regulated Learning Scale" and "Observation Scale for Distance Education" were used as data collection tools. Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used in data analysis. According to the findings, there is a significant relationship between primary reading and writing teaching self-efficacy levels, self-regulatory learning skills, and their thoughts on distance education., On the other hand, there is no mediating effect of views on distance education between primary reading and writing teaching self-efficacy levels and self-regulatory learning skills seen.

**Keywords:** Classroom teacher, Distance education, First reading and writing, Self- efficacy, Self-regulated learning.

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\* This article was produced from the first author's master's thesis under the supervision of the second author.

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## INTRODUCTION

Humanity is living in an era built on reading and writing (Öz, 2009). Therefore, individuals are expected to adapt to a world rapidly changing with technology, to be able to use computers, phones, and the internet to communicate and acquire information. This is also needed to produce and process a plethora of information and to have good literacy skills (Akyol, 2015). This is only possible by providing individual elementary school students with a quality first reading and writing education in elementary school. This is because the first reading and writing skills that individuals learn in primary school affect not only affect students' primary school lives but also their entire lives (Çelenk, 2007; Öz, 2009). The development of literacy skills allows students to increase their academic success, improve their language skills, and increase their self-confidence. Raising individuals who can understand and interpret what they read and have developed critical skills is one of the things that are aimed in our age. The literacy skill acquired by individuals in primary school is of great importance in secondary school and beyond. Students experience most of what they experience in the educational environment in the first grade of primary school, so the literacy skills acquired regularly and systematically show how solid the foundation of the skills that students will acquire in the future will be. Considering that in the age of technology and communication, students will present the experiences they have produced and experienced in expressing themselves on the basis of literacy skills, we can think how much of a share literacy has in forming the basis of communication (Saygili, 2013).

Teachers play the most important role in the mission of providing first reading and writing skills to individuals, which affect their entire lives. Teachers who are involved in the education and training system as the practitioners of this system not only help individuals gain these skills, but also ensure that first reading and writing skills are used with the highest proficiency (Akyol, 2015). Primary school teachers who instruct kids in their initial reading and writing skills must first establish student engagement, make effective use of class time affectively, and then follow up with them by having them engage in practice exercises appropriate for their grade level (Ekin, 2018). In a study conducted by Kılıç (1996), it is reported that determining the competencies of the teachers who manage the education process and the factors that affect these competencies is of great importance for ensuring the desired efficiency of the education and training process. Similarly, there are various studies showing that teacher competencies are a predictor of students' success. Benzer şekilde öğretmen yeterliklerinin öğrencilerin başarılarının yordayıcısı olduğuna dair çeşitli çalışmalar da bulunmaktadır (Bahar, 2019; Feldman and Kubota, 2015; Komarraju and Nadler, 2013; Zuffianò, Alessandri, Gerbino, Kanacri, Di Giunta, 2013; Alcı, Erden & Baykal, 2008; Suk Hwang & Vrangistinos, 2002; Hampton & Mason, 2003). The foremost factor that affects teachers' competencies which that needs to be determined is the teachers' self-efficacy levels related to the process. Teachers need to believe that they will be successful while creating the learning process, managing the classroom, using strategies, methods, and techniques, and controlling and following up with the process. This belief is termed as teachers' belief of self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy is related to students' achievement, motivation and self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen- Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Therefore, teacher efficacy is important for the successful execution of the initial literacy teaching process. Teacher self-efficacy, which has been discussed by various researchers (Ma, Chutiyami, Zhang & Nicoll, 2021; Lazarides & Warner, 2020; Choi, Lee & Kim, 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016; Mojavi & Tamiz, 2012; Afacan, 2008; Algan, 2006; Tepe & Demir, 2012) is seen as a cognitive step that leads a teacher to success. This is due to the fact that because teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are more willing to experiment with methods that are appropriate for the students' educational levels, and more assured when responding to inquiries from students (Tschannen- Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). They are also more successful when implementing novel teaching techniques (Onbaşı, 2014). They conduct more cognitive activities, are more receptive to recent technological innovations in the process, and can adapt to regulated programs (Cerit, 2013). Since teachers with high self-efficacy also use constructivist approaches with more proficiency, they can design interesting and motivating activities, as well as contribute more to student success. They are more confident about the teaching process (Ocak, Ocak & Kalender, 2017). They research and apply effective teaching methods (Aydın, Uzuntiryaki, Temli & Tarkin, 2013). Another factor that increases self-efficacy is self-regulated learning skills, which teachers need.

People who grow up in a setting where self-regulated learning abilities are encouraged and nurtured by teachers with these abilities have an advantage in life. This is because it is very important for individuals to develop their knowledge and skills and to obtain information that will carry them forward in life (Yılmaz, 2016). Teachers need to organize learning environments to help develop students' self-regulated learning skills. In order for teachers to be able to do this, they must have know self-regulated learning skills. Teachers with self-regulated learning skills will be able to teach more successfully and help students acquire these skills more easily. In recent years, various studies have examined primary education teachers' self-regulated learning skills (Yavuzarslan, 2017), metacognitive self-regulation strategies (Esit, 2016), their proficiency for self-regulation and the impact of this proficiency on academic success (Çolakoğlu, 2016; Ömer & Akçayoğlu, 2021; ), the relationship between self-regulatory learning skills and teaching methods these teachers use (Yılmaz, 2016), and teachers' proficiency in using learning strategies that support self-regulated learning skills (Evin-Gencil, Erdoğan & Aydın, 2014). However, there are also studies examining the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning competencies (Ulfatun, Septiyanti & Lesmana, 2021; Lee, Allen, Cheng, Watson & Watson, 2021; Cho & Kim, 2019; Çimenli & Çoban, 2019). However, no study has been found to examine the self-regulated learning competencies of primary school teachers and their self-efficacy for primary literacy teaching. Therefore, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature.

In addition to these skills necessary for teachers in the first reading and writing education process, various other materials can be used. One of these materials is the digital products developed for first reading and writing education purposes. Altunkaynak and Çağmlar (2020), who found that primary education teachers' use of digital products was at a "moderate" level, recommend that they increase their use of digital products. It is clear how important it is for instructors to use digital resources in light of the epidemic that our country and the rest of the world have been experiencing since 2019. The early literacy education process, which is important in the early

years of primary school, has been carried out by distance education for the first time on the EBA platform and or through communication technologies such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. In light of this, this study is therefore crucial for illuminating the perspective on the early literacy education carried out in these digital contexts.

The primary goals of this study included examining the first reading and writing teaching process used in distance learning through other studies, assessing primary education teachers' self-efficacy and self-regulated learning abilities about first reading and writing teaching, and providing primary education teachers, planners, and administrators with the study's findings. This study is significant for understanding how teachers perceive their levels of self-efficacy, how they may utilize that knowledge to organize students' learning environments, and how crucial it is for teachers to use distance learning in modern classrooms.

This study investigated the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions and the factors of self-regulation and distance education. In line with this primary goal, answers to the following sub-goals were sought:

(1) Is there a significant relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions, self-regulation, and attitudes towards distance education?

(2) Do attitudes towards distance education significantly mediate the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions and their self-regulated learning skills?

## **METHOD**

### ***Research Model***

This study employed a correlational survey design, a quantitative research method to examine the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions and the factors of self-regulated learning skills and distance education. Correlational survey design is used in studies that examine a relationship between two or more variables without interfering with these variables (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2012; Creswell, 2012; Field, 2009).

### ***Universe and Sample***

The sample of this study consists of 382 primary education teachers who worked in 10 primary schools in Erzurum Province during the 2021-2022 academic year. Thirt-two of these teachers were excluded from the study for not completing all of the scales, marking the same option for all answers, and being determined as extreme values in the analyses. The maximum variation sampling approach was used to sample the 350 primary school teachers who made up the sample. This sampling method was used in order to describe the similarities or differences between the factors through a broader framework in line with the purpose of the research (Patton, 2015; Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). Diversity in schools, gender, seniority, and educational level of the teachers was

considered while selecting the teachers who participated in the study. Table 1 presents the distribution of the demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, seniority, educational status, and grade levels they teach, of the primary education teachers who participated in the study.

**Table 1.** Data on the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Female	223	63.7
	Male	127	36.3
Age	20-30	90	25.7
	31-40	128	36.6
	41-50	105	30.0
	50 and over	27	7.7
Seniority	1-5 years	83	23.7
	6-10 years	99	28.3
	11-15 years	39	11.1
	16-20 years	51	14.6
	21 years and above	78	22.3
Educational Status	Bachelor's Degree	320	91.4
	Master's Degree	27	7.7
	Doctoral Degree	3	0.9
Grade Levels they teach	1st grade	66	18.9
	2nd grade	96	27.4
	3rd grade	112	32.0
	4th grade	76	21.7

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 223 (63.7%) of the participants in the study were male teachers, and 127 (36.3%) were female teachers. It is observed that of the teachers who participated in the research, 90 (25.7%) were between the ages of 20-30, 128 (36.6%) were between the ages of 31-40, 105 (30.0%) were between the ages of 41-50, and 27 (7.7%) were 50 years of age or older. It is also observed that while 83 of the teachers (23.7%) had a professional seniority between 0-5 years, 99 (28.3%) had a professional seniority between 6-10 years, 39 (11.1%) had a professional seniority between 11-15 years, 51 (14.6%) had a professional seniority between 16-20 years and 78 (22.3%) of them had a professional seniority of 21 years or more respectively. When the educational status of the teachers is examined, it is seen that 320 (91.4%) of them had a bachelor's degree, 27 (7.7%) had a master's degree, and 3 (0.9%) had a doctoral degree. When the grade levels of the primary education teachers who participated in the study are examined, it is observed that 66 (18.9%) of them were teaching 1st grade, 96 (27.4%) of them were teaching 2nd grade, 112 (32.0%) of them were teaching 3rd grade and 76 (21.7%) of them were teaching 4th grade.

#### **Data Collection Tools**

This study used the "Self-efficacy Scale for First Reading and Writing Teaching" prepared in Turkish by Özdemir (2015) to determine primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacies. To examine

primary education teachers' self-regulated learning skills, this study utilized the "Self-regulated Learning Skills Scale" prepared in Turkish by Turan (2009). The "Perceptions Towards Distance Education Scale" developed in Turkish by Yıldırım, Çelik, Yıldırım and Karaman (2014) was also used to determine the perceptions of primary education teachers towards distance education. For this research, the permission of the committee numbered 51694156-050.99-13236 was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Bayburt University.

#### ***Self-efficacy Scale for First Reading and Writing Teaching***

In this study, the Self-efficacy Scale for First Reading and Writing Teaching prepared in Turkish by Özdemir (2015) was used to determine primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacies. This scale is a five-point Likert-type scale. It is one-dimensional and consists of 47 questions. The scale's validity is high with its explained variance ratio and single dimension and its capacity to measure the intended property. The scale also has high reliability with a .74 reliability (Özdemir, 2015). In the reliability analysis performed in this study, the reliability coefficient was found to be .78.

#### ***Self-regulated Learning Skills Scale***

In this research, the Self-regulated Learning Skills Scale prepared in Turkish by Turan (2009) was used to examine primary education teachers' self-regulated learning skills. The scale consists of 41 propositions and four sub-dimensions. The scale's validity is also high with its explained variance ratio, four dimensions, and capacity to measure the intended property. The scale also has high reliability with .92 reliability. The propositions and sub-dimensions in the scale are consistent with each other. Thus, they can measure the same property (Turan, 2009). In the reliability analysis performed in this study, the reliability coefficient was found to be .91.

#### ***Perceptions Towards Distance Education Scale***

In this study, the Perceptions Towards Distance Education Scale developed in Turkish by Yıldırım, Çelik, Yıldırım, and Karaman (2014) was used in order to quantitatively reveal the perceptions of primary education teachers towards distance education during the pandemic period. The scale consists of 18 items and four sub-dimensions (Yıldırım, Çelik, Yıldırım & Karaman, 2014). The scale's validity is high with its explained variance ratio and four dimensions and its capacity to measure the intended property. The scale also has high reliability with a .86 reliability (Yıldırım, Çelik, Yıldırım & Karaman, 2014). In the reliability analysis performed in this study, the reliability coefficient was found to be .89.

#### ***Analysis of the Data***

The data were analyzed using SPSS.20 package program. Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacies, self-regulated learning skills,

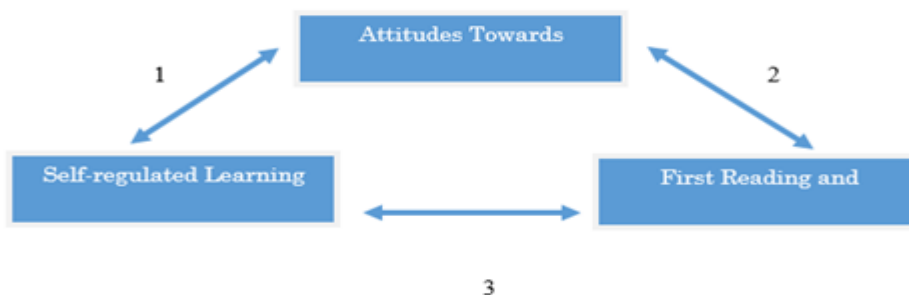
and perceptions towards distance education. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether perceptions toward distance education mediated this relationship.

The validity of the scores obtained from the scales was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis using the Amos program. The reliability of the results obtained from the scale was determined using Cronbach's alpha in the SPSS program. In addition, the data's structural reliability factor was calculated by using the standardized factor load and error factor outputs of the Amos program. In this study, the skewness and kurtosis values were examined to test the normality of the data. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Skewness and Kurtosis Values for Self-efficacy Scale for First Reading and Writing Teaching, Self-regulated Learning Skills Scale and Perceptions Towards Distance Education Scale

	n	Average	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Skewness	Coefficient of Kurtosis
Self-efficacy Scale for First Reading and Writing Teaching	350	3.65	.57	-.287	-.297
Self-regulated Learning Skills Scale	350	4.22	.66	-.884	.085
Perceptions Towards Distance Education Scale	350	2.67	.92	.649	-.009

While Pearson correlation analysis was used to answer the first question of the study, multiple linear regression analysis was used to answer the second question of the study. The research model presented in Figure 1 revealed the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions. The model was also used to examine self-regulated learning skills and attitudes towards distance education and to determine the mediating effect of attitudes towards distance education on the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions and self-regulated learning skills.



**Figure 1.** Diagram of Relations Between Variables

**FINDINGS**

***The Relationship Between Primary Education Teachers' First Reading and Writing Teaching Self-Efficacy Perceptions, Self-regulated Learning Skills and Attitudes Towards Distance Education***

The study first sought to answer the question, "Does the initial reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions, self-regulation, and attitudes toward distant education among primary school instructors have a significant relationship?" Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the study variables. The findings obtained from the correlation analysis related to the first question of the research are presented below.

**Table 3.** The Relationship Between First Reading and Writing Teaching Self-Efficacy Perceptions, Self-Regulated Learning Skills and Attitudes Towards Distance Education

Correlation		First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perception	Self-regulated learning skills	Attitudes towards distance education
First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perception	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.725**	.789**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	350	350	350
Self-regulated learning skills	Pearson Correlation	.725**	1.000	.756**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	350	350	350
Attitudes towards distance education	Pearson Correlation	.789**	.756**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350

\*\* The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is a very significant positive relationship between the first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and attitudes towards distance education ( $r=.789^{**}$ ;  $p=.000$ ). It is also observed that there is a very significant positive relationship between the first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills ( $r=.725^{**}$ ;  $p=.000$ ). Lastly, the table also shows that there is a very significant positive relationship between self-regulated learning skills and attitudes towards distance education ( $r=.756^{**}$ ;  $p=.000$ ).

***The Mediating Effect of Attitudes Towards Distance Education on the Relationship Between Primary Education Teachers' First Reading and Writing Teaching Self-efficacy Perceptions and Self-regulated Learning Skills***

The second question of the research is "Do attitudes towards distance education have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy



perceptions and their self-regulated learning skills?". The analyses performed about the second research topic are presented below.

In the first step of the three-step multiple regression analysis, it was observed that self-regulated learning skills ( $\beta = .750$ ) had a positive formative effect on the dependent variable of first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy [ $R^2 = 0.526$ ,  $p = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ]. In the second step, it was observed that attitudes towards distance education affected the dependent variable of first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy [ $\beta = .789$ ,  $R^2 = 0.623$ ,  $p = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ]. In the third step, when first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy, self-regulated learning skills, and the mediating variable of attitudes towards distance education were modeled together, it was observed that the effect of self-regulated learning skills on first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy continued [self-regulated learning skills  $\beta = 0.300$ , attitudes towards distance education  $\beta = 0.563$ ,  $R^2 = 0.661$ ,  $p = .000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ]. Although the beta value and the  $R^2$  value decreased, it can be argued that the effect continued because the p value turned out to be significant. Therefore, it was concluded that attitudes towards distance education did not mediate the relationship between first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and their self-regulated learning skills. The three-step regression analysis results are presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Findings on the Mediating Effect of Attitudes Towards Distance Education

	Variable	Beta	Standard error	$\beta$	t	p
Model 1	Self-regulated learning skills	46.808	6.235		7.508	.000
	First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions	.750	.038	.725	19.637	.000
$R = .725$ $R^2 = .526$ $F = 385.595$ $p = .000$						
Self-regulated learning skills = $46.808 - .750 * \text{First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions}$						
Model 2	Attitudes towards distance education	109.247	2.590		42.176	.000
	First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perception	1.229	.051	.789	23.964	.000
$R = .789$ $R^2 = .623$ $F = 574.285$ $p = .000$						
Attitudes towards distance education = $109.247 - 1.229 * \text{First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions}$						
Model 3	First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy	76.060	5.832		13.041	.000
	Self-regulated learning skills	.876	.074	.563	11.779	.000
	Attitudes towards distance education	.310	.049	.300	6.275	.000
$R = .813$ $R^2 = .661$ $F = 338.492$ $p = .000$						
First reading and writing teaching self-efficacy perceptions = $76.060 + .310 * \text{Self-regulated learning skills} - .876 * \text{Attitudes towards distance education}$						

The findings presented in Table 4 indicate that the necessary conditions have not been met for conducting structural equation modeling to determine the mediation effect. Thus, it has been revealed that attitudes

towards distance education are not a mediating variable in the relationship between first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills.

## **CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION**

In order to accomplish the first subgoal of the research, the relationships between the three variables were examined separately. This study analyzed the relationship between first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills. As a result of the analysis, it was found that there is a very significant positive relationship between first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills. The study also subsequently analyzed the relationship between the first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and attitudes towards distance education was analyzed. Analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between the first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and attitudes toward distance education. Finally, the relationship between self-regulated learning skills and attitudes towards distance education was analyzed. This analysis also found a very significant positive relationship between self-regulated learning skills and attitudes toward distance education. When the literature was searched, although various studies on first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy (Sun, et al., 2021; Clark, 2020; Corkett, et al., 2019; Malatesha-Joshi, et al. ,2019; Ergün, 2017; Delican, 2016; Özdemir, 2015; Dedeli, 2008; Yıldırım,2008), self-regulated learning skills (Baharun, et al., 2020; Oates, 2019; Mazlumoğlu, 2019; Aybek & Aslan, 2017; Yılmaz, 2016; Güler, 2015; Çelik-Ercoşkun & Köse, 2014; Çelik, 2012) and attitudes towards distance education (Karaca and Kelam, 2020; Bakioğlu & Çevik, 2020; Gürer, Tekinarslan & Yavuzalp, 2016; Arı & Kanat, 2020; Ünal and Bulunuz, 2020; Durak, Çankaya & İzmirli, 2020; Hammond, Watson, Brumbelow, Fields, Shryock, Chamberland & Herbert, 2020; Alper, 2020; Wasserman & Migdal, 2019) were found, no studies examining the relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulated learning skills and attitudes towards distance education were found. This study is, therefore, very significant since it closes this gap in the literature.

Through the second subgoal of the research, the relationship between the variables were revealed. In addition, it was also determined whether distance education has a mediating effect on these relationships. As a result of the analysis, it was found that first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills affect each other. Attitudes towards distance education, which was later included in the analysis as the mediating variable, were analyzed together with other variables. The analysis revealed that the variable of attitudes towards distance education could not eliminate the effect of self-regulated learning skills. Thus, it has been established that attitudes towards distance education do not mediate the relationship between first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy and self-regulated learning skills.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

- Further research should be conducted on the factors that negatively affect primary education teachers' first reading and writing teaching self-efficacy.

- It is recommended to conduct other studies examining the relationship between self-regulatory learning skills and different variables.
- In this study, an opinion scale for distance education was used. Studies using different methods such as interviews, observations and focus groups can be conducted, similar studies can be conducted on different sample groups and more comprehensive results can be obtained.
- Further research using qualitative research methods such as observation and interviews or mixed methods should be conducted to determine primary education teachers' primary education self-efficacy.

#### **ETHICAL TEXT**

**Ethics committee approval:** This study was carried out with the approval decision Bayburt of University Ethics Committee (Protocol No. E-51694156-050.99-13236) at the 2021/72 meeting dated 09.04.2021.

“In this article, journal writing rules, publication rules, research and publication ethics and journal ethics rules were followed. It is protected by copyright from the rays that may arise related to the article.

**Author(s) Contribution Rate:** The first author and the second author contributed equally to this study.

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