Family Intervention as an Important Factor in the Success of Distance Education (DE)

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This scientific paper aims to uncover the role of families as a key factor in the success of distance education, in light of the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, distance education needs integrated support for children, building a partnership between the family and school and developing mutual responsibility for the success of children in the education system. In this way, parental interest is increased, parents' efforts to support schools are encouraged, and they directly make a positive impact on a successful educational system. Given the importance of family intervention and the participation of educational institutions, encouraging children and their involvement in school activities, in this paper, we discuss and analyse the positive effects of family intervention; the extent of cooperation and their participation with the school administration in the field of distance education; parental support for children during distance education; and provide examples of good practices by applying a questionnaire (closed and open) to 12 parents, revolving around parents 'participation in the distance learning process. In addition to their perceptions of the reality of education about, the degree of satisfaction with distance education, and the extent to which its needs are met for children? In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, conclusions are drawn and important recommendations made that focus on improving the educational environment and the growth of mental health for all.

Keywords: *Novel Coronavirus; Family Intervention; COVID-19; Distance Education; Online Learning.*

1. **Introduction**:

Whilst the Ministry of Education makes a great effort to keep the continuity of education, these efforts do not replace the cooperation of families. The Ministry believes that "families and parents are partners in the success of the distance education (henceforth DE) profession and this success can only be achieved by the support and participation of the parents". Therefore, the support required from parents and the family is the participation of the school and the children in engaging in DE due to the social distancing measures. DE will be mainly held at home utilising modern technologies that differ from traditional education, which is almost limited to performing the assignments and homework that is given to them daily. Many researchers recognise the important role played by the family and the strong positive relationship between families and schools.

The role of the family is an important factor in the success of the educational process through the psychological preparation of children. To achieve the goal of the DE system, to set plans for the school day such as the number of hours, allocating a suitable place in the home to help them focus, supervising them, parents have to explain (especially to young children) the circumstances that imposed this kind of education. Parents also have to inform their children that fear of disease is the reason for keeping them at home. The government makes great efforts to protect the whole country from the virus, and we must all cooperate to help regarding containment og this pandemic. When the ministry enacted the quarantine that meant study would be held via DE, all these procedures were taken in order to protect your health and to protect you from infection.

The concept of DE appeared in the late seventies in some American and European universities, where various educational materials were sent in the form of books, videotapes, or recording tapes to students through the mail, and the students, in turn, sent the assignments given to them using the same way. To do the final exam students had to go to the university headquarters to be able to obtain the university degree. In the late eighties, the methods of communication witnessed a great development in which it became via cable and television channels, then the emergence of the internet in the early nineties generated a good and appropriate way to rely on by introducing DE. Families and schools communicate with each other in multiple ways. Schools send home notes and handouts about important events and activities. Parents provide educators with information about their children's health 2017 (Masa Đurisic in Mila Bunijevac, 2017).

It is worth noting that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced in a statement on March 18, 2020, that about half of the world's students have dropped out of education due to Covid-19, which according to current indicators may be prolonged. A statement was enacted to commence the study for a period of seven weeks for all levels, via DE in coordination between the Ministry of Education and several government

agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, and the Human Capacity Development Program. This is to prevent a second wave of Covid-19, and a precautionary step that will provide a healthy environment for students, teachers, families and the entire country. This decision raised several questions in the minds of parents and some interested people who do not work in the system of DE, including:

> What does DE mean? What does it offer to learners other than what the traditional school offers? What are the methods adopted by the Ministry of Education for this type of education as a new method or style? To what extent can the integration of the efforts of parents (families), school administration and teachers lead to the success of this type of education? What concerns us in this regard is family participation as an important factor in the success of that educational system.

Statement of the problem:

The problem of the current research emerges through the recognition of the extent of cooperation and participation of parents with the school administration in the field of DE, parental support for children during DE, through discussions conducted by the researcher with parents - the research sample - and through contacting them during the DE to find out answers to the following questions:

What is the reality of DE?

What is the degree of satisfaction with DE?

How well does DE meet students' needs?

The researcher recognised the existence of some aspects that might be negative and others that might be positively related to some aspects of the DE process. These aspects may weaken the efficiency of the educational system in terms of its mechanisms and outputs, in a way that suggests the need to conduct various and continuous studies to find out the extent of family support and intervention in addition to what the educational authorities do in terms of efforts to address the potential difficulties. Also, these studies attempt to introduce perceptions that include positive aspirations for the success of the DE process.

Research objectives:

The current research aims to "identify the awareness of the range of family cooperation and intervention, and the participation of parents with the school administration in the field of DE. It also aims to identify parental support for children during the period of DE'.

In light of the general objective mentioned above, the following questions can be formulated:

1- What are the positive aspects perceived by families to the support given from schools to students - as an essential input to the DE process?
2- What are the positive aspects perceived by parental support for children regarding the DE process?
3- What is the current status of DE?
4- What is the degree of satisfaction with distance education?
5- How well do they meet their needs for students?

Research significance

The importance of the current research stems from the importance of the topic itself, which is to identify some aspects of families in the DE system from the point of view of parents. Thus, the importance of this research emerges, as an attempt to identify some positive aspects of the educational process and some negative ones that represent problems perceived by a sample of parents as a form of family intervention who are living the reality of the distance education system in the Kingdom.

The purpose of this article is to draw the attention of the educational authorities to monitor these aspects and try to reduce their severity and raise the efficiency of the DE system and its components. It is one of the few studies that attempts to identify the form of family intervention related to some aspects of the DE process and is closely related to the educational reality.

Such a study has great importance in helping teachers, school administration, educational and psychological counsellors, in identifying the amount and type of family support and feedback to develop plans to amend the challenges and address them in a planned, organised and objective manner in thinking and treatment.

Research concepts:

- *Family intervention:*

This concept refers to the educational and service methods used by families to assist the educational administration or learning institutions and children in their studies, and that is intentionally through family dialogue with the school and children within the framework of the distance education system.

- *Online education:*

It is one of the relatively modern methods of education and it depends on the learner's presence in a place different from the source that a book or teacher is online using a computer. It is

generally an education that depends on the connection to the internet and the interactions that take place through the forums. It is characterised by providing space and time, and it is not required that the teacher be in the same place.

2. Methods

The current study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine parents' perceptions of how to participate in distance education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to determine the pros and cons and challenges facing distance education, and to what extent distance education met the needs of their children. The qualitative and the virtual approach would be suitable to examine that experiment which is believed not to be evaluated through numerical data (quantitatively). Qualitative analysis is particularly effective for subjects that have not been adequately studied in scientific research or if there are variables that are difficult to define or have not yet been identified (Morrow, 2007). Thus, the qualitative approach focuses on analysing words and texts rather than numbers to describe phenomena and usually includes an extensive study of a small number of cases (king et al. 2006).

The participants:

The basic sample was randomly selected, consisting of 12 parents (6 males and 6 females) interested in following up their children in distance education, their average age is 43.15 years, with a standard deviation of 3.87 years.

Study tool:

The researcher developed a questionnaire (closed and open). The question was "From your point of view, what is the form and amount of participation and support provided by your excellency to the school and the children during distance education?" And other sub-questions emerge from this question as follows:

> What is the status of distance education?
> What is the degree of satisfaction with distance education?
> How well do they meet their needs for students?

After that, a content analysis of the responses of the research sample to the open question was made, and according to a simplified method of content analysis, specific statements were formulated that represent the aspects and forms of participation by the family for aspects of the educational process (distance education). The close-ended questionnaire included in its final form (12) statements representing the form of family intervention in aspects of the educational process within the framework of the distance education system.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire:

The reliability of the tool:

Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire items, the reliability was calculated on the components of the questionnaire (the educational process, student - teacher - tests), and on the questionnaire as a whole using Alpha Cronbach coefficient. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability of the questionnaire

Component	Number of items	The questionnaire
Reliability	12	.65

Table 1 shows that co-efficient of the questionnaire as a whole was acceptable.

Validity of the tool:

With regard to the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher relied on the apparent validity of the items, which seems to represent the characteristic to be measured. In addition, it was being derived from verbal responses of the research sample to the open question that was initially asked to them. The internal consistency factor of performance on the items and components of the questionnaire was then calculated.

Table 2. Consistency of the components of the questionnaire

Component	Number of items	The questionnaire
Consistency	12	.76

It is clear from the Table 2 that the significance of the correlation coefficients or the internal consistency of the scores of the components in the total degree, which suggests a kind of consistency of the concept or formation of what the questionnaire aims to measure.

Second: the open questionnaire in the form of the semi-structured interview:

The researcher constructed a semi-structured interview after reviewing the theoretical literature and some other interviews such as Haberstroh et al., (2007) and (Kit et al.,) 2017). Semi-structured interviews through an open questionnaire whose topics deals with distance education is a common method for collecting data in qualitative research and the quality of interview procedures and questions mainly affects the results of the study (Kallio et al., 2016). In addition, a survey sample of 4 parents was used to ensure that the participants understood and comprehended the interview questions and to estimate the time taken to conduct the interview. The interview consisted of some demographic data and 10 basic questions that focused on various aspects related to the advantages and disadvantages of distance education. It included families' perceptions of improving the distance education service and their satisfaction with

distance education. The interview also began with a preliminary question, "What is your experience with distance education so far?" To break the routine of the interview, all the interview questions were open-ended question

3. Data Analysis

The following statistical methods were used: -Frequency distribution and percentages of occurrences.

Data analysis procedures

The researcher applied the closed-ended questionnaire, along with a semi-structured interview, to collect data in this study through a telephone interview with the families. The quantitative and qualitative analysis sample was chosen from the basic sample randomly from those who met the criteria for selecting the sample. Then a preliminary contact was made with them via e-mail to know their willingness to participate in the application of the questionnaire and the interview, and whether they were interested in knowing more details about the study. After the participants showed an interest in the study, then they were involved in the questionnaire questions. The interview was done individually. The interviews took a period of time ranging between 15-20 minutes. At the end of the application and the interview, the participants were asked if they had any other inquiries or suggestions. For quantitative data analysis, frequencies and percentages were used, or qualitative data analysis. For the interview questions, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used. Personal and practical experiences generated a dialogue that was converted into paragraphs and then analysed. The qualitative data of the interviews was analyzed.

4. Results

Table 3. Realizing the extent of cooperation and participation of parents with the school administration in the field of distance education

No.	Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Take advantage of school awareness programs on distance education.	%88.9	%6.5	%4.6
2	Training on the application of interactive lessons for distance education	%83.0	%8.8	%7.2
3	Make sure to know course timetables.	%79.0	%3.0	%18
4	Cooperating with the school administration in providing electronic devices.	%78.9	%12.1	%9.0
5	Interest in following up the portal of "Madarasati" platform.	%69.0	%21,0	%10.0
6	Tracking teachers 'commitment to implementing the distance education process on time.	%62.9	%20	%17.1

The results of the research in Table 3 showed several positive aspects related to parents' behavior and perceptions of the extent of participation with the school administration in the field of distance education. They were of a high level, as the rate of benefit from participation in awareness programs provided by schools was (88.9%). Other aspects include attention to training in the application of interactive lessons (83%), and keenness to know the times of lessons and decisions (79%). The extent of parents' cooperation with the school in raising the level of achievement for their children and providing electronic devices was 78.9%. Attention to following up the Madrasati platform was 69.0% and agreement and the extent of teacher commitment or dropout from school was 62.9%.

Table 4. Parental support for children during distance education

No.	Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Providing and equipping the appropriate educational environment for children.	%95	%5.0	-
2	Acquisition of the electronic device for use in distance education.	%92.8	%15.6	-
3	Encouraging children to complete all educational lessons.	%90.0	%10.0	-
4	Ensuring compliance with the general policy for the use of devices during distance education.	%87.9	%11.0	%1.0
5	Commitment to the time allotted for classes according to the schedule approved by the school for the courses.	%85	% .14	%1.0
6	Contacting technical support in case of challenges that hinder distance education.	%84.3	%14.7	%1.0

The results in Table 4 showed several positive aspects related to the behaviour of parents, their perceptions of the extent of participation with children and the preparation of the appropriate educational environment for them at home. For example the appropriate place, the internet and the general appearance in the field of distance education showed a high level. The percentage of this support provided by parents to their children during distance education was 95.0%. The concern and keenness to acquire the electronic device used for distance education was 92.8%. Encouraging children and making sure to perform homework and complete all educational lessons was 90%. The extent of parents' cooperation with the school in adhering to the general policy for the use of electronic devices during education was 87.9%. The interest in following up the time allocated to classes according to the schedule approved by the school was 85.0%. Follow-up and communication with technical support was 84.3%.

The results of the qualitative analysis using IPA are presented in Table 5. It illustrated the three super-ordinate themes that provided a description of the participants' experiences and perceptions of distance education (1- the status of distance education, 2- family satisfaction with distance education, 3- fulfilling families' needs for distance education from a parent's perspective).

Table 5. Families' perception of DE

Super-ordinate themes	Sub-ordinate themes	Quotes from Interviews
Status of DE	Disadvantages of DE	-The difficulty of providing the technological infrastructure of suitable equipment, devices and lines of communication on both sides so that each of them can communicate with the other. -Lack of qualified human cadres that are trained with designing and producing educational materials and supervising the proper progress of the educational process. -Lack of clarity of sound or picture due to the presence of some problems sometimes with the internet.
	Advantages of DE	-To help meet the challenges of schools in increasing the percentage of student absenteeism and school dropout rates. - To contribute to reducing the waste of resources and provide a system for accurate monitoring of students' progress. -To develop students' skills in independent and self-learning and gain personal skills -To developing communication skills and facilitating the process of communication with all those concerned with student learning. -To create an advanced educational system in line with the rapid progress in the world. -Looking ahead in the digital age in order to address crises with digital intelligence. -To benefit students in a useful, fun, fast and easy-to-absorb dose. -To help discover students' digital prowess in early childhood. -To ensure the delivery of information to the learner in the shortest time, the least effort and the greatest benefit. -To make the student more interested when using new technologies in education. -It is commensurate with the current situation of the Coronavirus pandemic due to the necessity of social distancing" ... " -Easier to reach parents anytime, anywhere"
	Future of DE	The spread of online education in all centers, not only in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but in all countries of the world "It would be a suitable alternative to education, but not a substitute for traditional education".
Family satisfaction of DE	Preference of DE type	"My opinion of simultaneous and asynchronous education depends on the children's understanding and comprehending of what has been studied".. "I prefer online lessons are because they give children the flexibility to study in the place they want".
	Preference of suitable technology	Each program makes a different contribution to the success of distance education... The best software used as a medium is ZOOM.

	Appropriate and inappropriate techniques and teaching skills	Most of the learning skills that are used in traditional direct education are used in distance education.
Meeting the needs of children from DE based on the perspective of parents	Parents' satisfaction of education	"Children's satisfaction did not differ in traditional education compared to distance education". "Without online learning, I would not have received teaching and learning services at all".
	Children's commitment and seriousness	"Students' commitment to the classes in distance education is about 85% at most". "I found that more than 15% of students are not committed to class time and duties".

1. *The status of distance education*

The status of distance education has been identified by parents in light of their experiences that they have already practised with their children. This yielded three aspects related to the status of the current experience and their expectations, which are explained as follows:

1.1. *Disadvantages of DE*

Perceptions of parents were characterised by some advantages and perceptions of distance education, while other participants identified specific disadvantages. These disadvantages can be summarised as follows:

 - The difficulty of providing the technological infrastructure of suitable equipment, devices and lines of communication on both sides so that each of them can communicate with the other. Society might have a negative perception of this method of education, which leads some people to avoid using it.

- Lack of qualified human cadres that are based on designing and producing educational materials and supervising the proper progress of the educational process.

- Lack of clarity of sound or picture due to some problems with the internet.

1.2. *Advantages of distance education*

The advantages of distance education are among the existing motives behind its spread among parents and children as well. Many parents, during the interview, stated some of the strengths of distance education based on their experiences with it.

- it helps face the challenges of schools in increasing the percentage of student absenteeism and school dropout rates.

- it contributes to reducing the waste of resources and provides a system for accurate monitoring of students' progress.

 -it improves students' skills in independent and self-learning and provides them with personal skills.

-it improves communication skills and facilitates the process of communication with all those concerned with teaching the student.

- it creates an advanced educational system in line with the rapid progress in the world.

- looking to the future in the digital age to face crises with digital intelligence.

- it provides students with a useful, fun, fast and easy-to-learn input.

- it helps discover students' digital intelligence in early childhood.

- it ensures the delivery of information to the learner in the shortest time, the least effort and the greatest benefit.

- it makes the student more interested when using new technologies in education.

- it is suitable with the current situation of the coronavirus pandemic due to the necessity of social distancing.

-"it is easier to reach parents at anytime, anywhere. "

1.3. The future of distance education

Distance education experiences did not satisfy the parents for only the current situation, but also their future expectations for its continuation or proliferation. Many parents indicated its continuation and spread more than now.

It will be an effective way of education in the coming years, more than the current time. The spread of education via the internet in all centers is not only in KSA but in all countries of the world. It will be a suitable alternative to education, but it is not a substitute for traditional education.

2. Family satisfaction of distance education

The researcher inferred from the participants' experience that they were satisfied with some aspects and characteristics of distance education as follows:

2.1. Distance education type preference:

There was clear satisfaction among the participants for some types of distance education and their dissatisfaction with some other types, whether due to their satisfaction with these types or because it achieves educational goals:

- My opinion of simultaneous and asynchronous education depends on the children's understanding and comprehending of what has been studied.
- "I prefer online lessons because it gives children the flexibility to study in the place they want".

2.2. Preference for technical medium

Just as there was parental satisfaction with the type of education, it was evident from the parents' experience that there was satisfaction and positive perceptions of certain technical mediums over other: Zoom is the most preferred application for some families. Each program makes a different contribution to educational success dimension, "the best application to use is ZOOM.

2.3. Appropriate and inappropriate techniques and teaching skills

Most of the educational skills that are used in traditional direct education are used in distance education.

3. Meeting the needs of children from DE from the parents' point of view

Parents' experience in distance education will not be separated from their children and the suitability of this type of intervention in solving their academic, educational and psychological problems. It was evident from the counselors' experience that there is important information centred on two important aspects: the children's satisfaction and their commitment and seriousness in distance education.

3.1. Children's Satisfaction:

Many parents found that there are clear positive impressions with their children, especially at the end of classes through distance education:

" Children's satisfaction did not differ in traditional education compared to distance education".
"   Without online education, I would not have received teaching and learning services at all ".

3.2. Children's commitment and seriousness

"The commitment of children to the schedule of classes for distance education is about 85% at most. It is found that 15% of the children are not committed to the class time and duties".

Recommendations

- Provide an appropriate educational environment for students at home.
- Spread the culture of self-learning, distance learning, and learning by research and participation.
- Make students, parents, teachers and school administrations aware about the initiative.
- The necessity of sudden questions to ensure the presence of the student and check attendance from time to time.
- Create mechanisms and conditions for the initiative to approve its outputs for admission to international universities.
- Students' commitment to the class schedule and the use of devices for the intended purpose.

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