



A DETERMINATION OF OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING RESOURCE ROOMS IN TURKEY

Mine Kizirⁱ

orcid.org/0000-0001-8801-5693

Department of Special Education,
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University,
Kötekli, 48000, Muğla,
Turkey

Abstract:

This research was conducted to determine the opinions and experiences of students with special needs regarding special education offered within resource rooms (RRs). To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 participants. The research employed the phenomenological method, one of the qualitative research methods. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews. In order to achieve validity and reliability in the study, “credibility,” “transferability,” and “confirmability” were all established. The students’ opinions and findings can be summarized as follows: special needs students mostly receive educational support as part of their academic (basic/culture) courses in RRs; that they usually learn new subjects or review prior learned subjects; that instead of the IEP team, it is either the students’ parents or their teachers alone who are involved in the course selection process; that the students also want to be involved in this process; that they are mostly pleased with the current RR settings, but still want dedicated RRs in schools; that gifted students prefer attending RRs outside of normal school hours, while others prefer attending during school hours as they face difficulties learning lessons in general education classrooms; that students have varying opinions about their peer relationships; that those who express negative opinions about their peer relationships were exposed to peer bullying; that they have good relationships with their teachers; and that they consider RRs to be an efficient educational practice that positively contributes to their academic achievement.

Keywords: resource room, special education, students with special needs, inclusive education, student feedback

ⁱ Correspondence: email minekizir@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Special education support services include the provision of special education services to students with special needs in the areas they need. These services include “*classroom assistance*,” “*counseling*,” and “*resource rooms*” (RRs) (Batu, 2000). In the simplest sense, special education in RRs can be defined as the provision of special education for students with special needs in other settings as part of their school time (McNamara, 1989). Students of different ages and levels of education who need special education can benefit from RRs as individuals or in small groups (Zionts, Zionts, and Simpson, 2002). In Turkey, RRs used to be established where proposed by a school’s administration and with the approval of the Provincial Directorate of National Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2006). However, based on an official government circular dated May 18 2015, it became compulsory to establish RRs within all schools that conduct inclusive education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2015). The basic principles regarding RRs are specified in the “Regulation on Special Education Services,” which was published in 2018. Accordingly, for all grade levels from preschool to high school, students can receive up to 40% of their weekly course hours within RRs, and that RR-based education can be provided to a maximum of three students sharing the exact same or similar characteristics during or outside of school hours (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018b). Also, the regulation states that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development unit, which consists of administrators, teachers, students’ parents, and also the students, decide on which courses will be provided to the student (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018b).

Mandatory since 2015, RRs have become one of the most widely used special education services in Turkey, affording teachers the opportunity to focus more on topics important for special needs students and to allocate their time to them. According to Dash (2005), these topics are; (a) providing individualized education in academic skills, (b) providing additional assistance to students in areas other than academic skills, (c) enabling functional and comprehensive assessment, (d) ensuring confidentiality during interviews with students and/or their parents, (e) enabling students to concentrate, and (f) providing an environment for the preparation of special materials. On the other hand, the disadvantages of RR education include requiring students to be outside of their normal classrooms for certain lessons, a potential lack of compliance between the school program and the RR program, general education classroom teachers might regard RRs as an opportunity to neglect their responsibility towards special needs students, and it may cause a degree of separation among students (Batu, 2000). In spite of these limitations and disadvantages, it should be noted that appropriate RR education significantly contributes to the provision of efficient special education services.

Given the critical functions of RRs, the classrooms/environments to be utilized as RRs require various properties. Accordingly, RRs should not simply be “anywhere available” in the school, but should be special rooms which are not too big and provide

properties appropriate for special needs education (Dash, 2005). The classrooms should be bright, well-organized, and comfortable. (McNamara, 1989). In addition, teachers to be assigned to RRs also require specific characteristics. Whilst these teachers do not have to be special education teachers (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018a), they must be able to evaluate students' needs, develop and implement plans according to these needs, have strong communication skills, and work in collaboration with all stakeholders (Dowson, 2007). RR teachers should help their students in their relationships with other students, and support them in coping with their negative emotions (Dash, 2005).

As previously mentioned, to be able to provide effective educational support in RRs and to increase the academic achievement and well-being of the students who attend RRs, it is necessary to provide RRs within an appropriate physical environment, with the right equipment, and to only assign teachers possessing certain characteristics. However, the key to the success of all special education support services is the social acceptance of special needs students and the cooperation of all stakeholders (Batu, 2013). These stakeholders include school administrators, teachers, parents, normally developing peers, and the students themselves. Therefore, each stakeholder's opinions and suggestions about RRs can make a significant contribution. A thorough search of the relevant literature yielded studies that were conducted in order to determine the opinions of *teachers* (Aydın, 2015; Bedur, Bilgiç and Taşlıdere, 2015; Kış, 2013; Nar, 2017; Semiz, 2018; Tortop and Dinçer, 2016), *school managers* (Çağlar, 2017; Sabbah and Shanaah, 2010; Valeo, 2008), *parents* (Falkmer, Anderson, Joosten and Falkmer, 2015; Peck, Staub, Gallucci and Schwartz, 2004; Somaily, Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman, 2012; Ziadat, 2014), and *students* (Klingner, Vaughn, Shay Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan, 1998; Rose, Barahona and Muro, 2017; Talley, 2017; Vaughn and Bos, 1987; Yang, Gentry and Choi, 2012) with regards to RRs.

Considering the literature, the number of studies that include the views and experiences of special needs students related to RR services in private education is very limited. One such study was conducted by Vaughn and Bos (1987) to determine the level of knowledge and perceptions of students with and without learning difficulties. According to the study's results, children without learning difficulties have positive perceptions of RRs, whilst children with learning difficulties have negative perceptions. Moreover, primary school students were found to have more negative perceptions than secondary school students. In another study conducted with 31 students with and without learning difficulties, Klingner et al. (1998) aimed to determine the students' perceptions with regards to inclusion and resource room settings. Their results indicated that students held different perceptions of both educational practices. While some students preferred inclusive education, others stated that special education support outside of the general education classroom was more beneficial, both academically and socially. Vaughn and Klingner (1998) analyzed eight studies conducted to reveal the perceptions of students with learning difficulties regarding inclusion and RR settings. As a result, they found that; (1) the majority of students preferred to spend a part of their

school day within the RR setting, (2) students liked RRs because the work was considered easier and more fun, and that they received the help they needed, (3) they liked the general education classroom because it was better suited to making friends, and (4) they were unsure as to who was responsible for the decision about whether they received educational support in the general education classroom or the RR. In another study, Yang et al. (2012) aimed to determine 564 students' perceptions of RRs, and found that gifted students held positive perceptions. Later, Talley (2017) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of special needs students regarding RRs and inclusive education. According to the results of the research; although students were subjected to peer bullying, such as being mocked, it was determined that they preferred the RR because they were satisfied with the support of the teacher and it helped them in their academic success. Rose et al. (2017), on the other hand, determined the perceptions of special needs students regarding special education support outside of the normal classroom. Their findings indicated that children with special needs held fewer positive opinions about these practices than others. Moreover, their social preference was reported as being considerably lower than that of their normally developing peers.

According to a review of the related national literature (in Turkey), no previous research was found that determined the opinions and experiences of special needs students about RRs. Only one study that included students' views was identified; however, it was based on inclusive education. Olçay-Gül and Vuran (2015) concluded that special needs students held positive perceptions about inclusive education, but that it lacked systematic education appropriate to differences of the individual.

Determining the opinions and experiences of students with special needs is very important in terms of increasing the quality of educational practices within RRs. Furthermore, revealing these students' opinions and experiences of RRs, and making improvements in line with their opinions may lead to their improved well-being and also in their academic achievements. The researcher anticipates that the current study will contribute both to the literature and to the field. Taking these as a starting point, the current study aims to determine the opinions and experiences of special needs students regarding RRs. To this end, answers to the following research questions were sought.

1.1 Research Questions

- 1) What are the opinions and experiences of students with special needs regarding the lessons held in RRs?
- 2) What are the opinions and experiences of students with special needs regarding the physical characteristics of RRs?
- 3) What are the opinions and experiences of students with special needs regarding RR hours?
- 4) How are the opinions and experiences of students with special needs in relation to their peers and teachers in the RR process?
- 5) What are the opinions and experiences of students with special needs regarding the contribution of RRs to their academic achievement?

6) What are the suggestions of students with special needs about RRs?

2. Methods

2.1. Research Model

The current study employed the phenomenological method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) defined the purpose of the phenomenological method as, “to reveal the experiences and perceptions of and the meanings attributed by individuals to a case” (p. 79).

2.2. Participants

“Data sources in phenomenological research are individuals or groups who experience and reflect the phenomenon that the research focuses on” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, p. 74). Therefore, participants in the current study were students educated in RRs. To determine the participants, “criterion sampling,” one of the purposive sampling methods, was employed. This method involves the determination of criteria and the study of appropriate cases by the researchers prior to the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The inclusion criteria for the current study were determined as; (a) being an individual with special needs, (b) attending RRs, (c) enrolled in K-12 education (first grade to 12th grade), and (d) being able to participate in an interview lasting at least 5 minutes, understand questions, and respond to them.

In determining the participants, preliminary interviews were conducted with school principals, assistant school principals, and school counsellors, who were also informed about the purposes of the study, the intended interview questions, and the inclusion criteria of the study. Schools that volunteered to participate in the study then identified prospective participants who met the criteria and then informed their students. To determine whether or not prospective participants met the inclusion criteria, a short interview was held with each student in addition to the preliminary interviews held with the administrators. During these short interviews, the researcher obtained certain personal information from each interviewee (e.g., name, grade, how many years they had attended RRs). All of the interviewees were found to have met the inclusion criteria. Accordingly, 22 students with special needs were accepted as eligible to participate in the study. Summary information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

Participant	Gender	Grade	Diagnosis	Time attending RRs
K1	Male	10	Visual Impairment	2 years
K2	Male	9	Low Vision	4 months
K3	Male	9	Intellectual Disability	1 year
K4	Female	8	Learning Difficulties	4 years
K5	Female	8	Learning Difficulties	3 years
K6	Male	7	Learning Difficulties + Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	3 years

Mine Kizir
A DETERMINATION OF OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS REGARDING RESOURCE ROOMS IN TURKEY

K7	Male	7	Learning Difficulties	5 years
K8	Male	5	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	2 years
Participant	Gender	Grade	Diagnosis	Time attending RRs
K9	Male	9	Learning Difficulties	2 years
K10	Male	9	Intellectual Disability	2 years
K11	Male	11	Intellectual Disability	1 year
K12	Female	5	Learning Difficulties	1 year
K13	Female	7	Learning Difficulties	2 years
K14	Female	7	Learning Difficulties	2 years
K15	Male	6	Learning Difficulties	1 year
K16	Male	6	Learning Difficulties	2 years
K17	Male	6	Learning Difficulties	2 years
K18	Female	7	Learning Difficulties	3 years
K19	Male	3	Gifted	2 years
K20	Male	3	Gifted	2 years
K21	Female	3	Gifted	1 year
K22	Female	7	Gifted	5 years

2.3. Data Collection Tool and Data Collection

In order to determine the level of experience of each participant special needs student regarding RRs, semi-structured interviews were preferred as the chosen medium as they make it easier to access more in-depth information, and provide the researcher with a wider range of opportunities (Walsh and Wiggins, 2003; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Interview questions were prepared for the determined purposes. In this process, first, the relevant literature was reviewed, with similar studies examined, and interview questions drafted considering special education conducted within RRs. While preparing the questions, care was taken to keep the questions simple and short in order not to introduce any unnecessary difficulty for the students in terms of their understanding or ability to answer them. The developed interview questions were then examined by two experts; one continuing a doctorate program in the field of special education and the other undertaking a Master's degree with prior special education field experience. The interview questions were then finalized in line with the experts' opinions. A total of 11 open-ended interview questions were developed so as to determine the participants' perceptions regarding lessons held within RRs, the physical characteristics of RRs, RR working hours, students' relationships with their peers and teachers, the contribution of RRs to students' academic achievement, and their thoughts and suggestions with regards to RRs.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher between May 27 and June 14, 2019 in the students' schools. Interviews were conducted individually with each student in the school library, a dedicated RR, or empty classrooms in order that the students would feel comfortable in giving their opinions freely and so that the interviews would be less likely to be interrupted. The shortest interview lasted 5 minutes and 52 seconds, whilst the longest lasted 16 minutes and 37 seconds. In total, the interviews lasted 3 hours, 8 minutes, and 20 seconds.

2.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews. Descriptive analysis can be defined as the systematic summarization of data according to themes determined prior to the analysis so as to organize and interpret the obtained data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The researcher obtained the necessary permission from each of the participants to record the interviews using an audio-recording application installed on a Samsung Note 3 smartphone. During the analysis process, a Word document was created for each participant, and transcripts of their interview recorded on these documents. The participants were assigned pseudonyms as K1, K2...K22 according to the order of the interviews. The combined length of the Word documents totaled 93 pages.

Following the transcription of the voice recordings the Word documents were then printed, and each question asked to the participants was highlighted using different colors. The responses of each of the participants to the questions were read through carefully. First, themes were determined based on interview questions. All of the interview transcripts were read several times, with categories and subcategories created under each theme. From the first stage, after interpretation of all the data, a total of 15 categories and 88 subcategories had been identified under six themes. Subsequently, similar subcategories were combined to achieve a revised total of 46 subcategories. During this process, the opinion of an expert engaged in special education was sought. The researcher and the expert first read through the interview transcripts separately and then together, and subsequently agreed upon the categories and subcategories.

2.5. Credibility, Transferability and Confirmability

In order to achieve validity and reliability, studies need to perform certain checks for “credibility,” “transferability,” and “confirmability,” and this also applies to qualitative research. However, since the process of qualitative research differs from other types of research, different concepts and ways are utilized in order to determine the validity and reliability of the study. Therefore, in the current study, credibility and transferability concepts instead of validity, and confirmability instead of reliability were employed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008).

The confirmability of the current study was performed through “interrater reliability.” To achieve this, an expert in the field of special education and the researcher read through the interview transcripts of seven participants, which equated to approximately 30% of all interview data, based on the assigned categories and each evaluated them independently. Considering their evaluations, the level of “consensus” and “dissensus” was established. The result was calculated using the formula $[(\text{Consensus} / \text{Consensus} + \text{Dissensus}) \times 100]$ developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). As a result of the interrater reliability, it was determined that the raters reached a consensus to an average of 95.4% based on the categories (with 86% as the lowest consensus level and 100% as the highest).

To ensure transferability, the detailed description method (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008) was applied, and excerpts from the answers given by the participants to the interview questions included. Also, another means to ensuring transferability is purposive sampling. In addition to transferability, confirmability was achieved through checking the confirmation of one of the participants. In doing this, the interview transcript of participant K22 was read back aloud to the participant, and the participant then asked to confirm that their original statements had been accurately transcribed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008).

3. Results

The current study was conducted in order to determine the perceptions of students with special needs regarding RR education. After analyzing the data obtained from the interviews, a total of six themes were established. In this section, the research findings are presented according to these six themes. The number of participants and the number of opinions differ because students sometimes gave more than one answer to the questions.

3.1. Theme 1. Students' Views and Experiences About Lessons Given in RRs

The first finding of the study relates to what the participants do in RR education. The students were asked what they do during their classes in RRs: 16 stated that **they learned lessons and/or named the activities held during classes**, whilst four gave **the names of their lessons and the activities they did**, and two participants **just gave the names of the lessons**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K4: *"We learn Math and History."*

K5: *"We sometimes do activities, sometimes learn lessons, sometimes take exams. In general education classrooms, lessons, for example, Math, are more difficult. But here, the teacher makes it easier for us."*

K10: *"We play games. We solve math problems. We read books in the Turkish lesson. We play games on tablets."*

The participant students were asked in which courses they received support in RRs. Except for one, the participants **stated that they learned academic lessons such as Mathematics, Turkish, Science, etc.** One gifted student **stated that they also took Visual Arts and Music (violin) lessons in addition to these courses**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K22: *"At first, I took Music, I mean Violin lessons. Then, when I started secondary school, I started taking Painting lessons with two other basic courses. Then our painting teacher left, and I went back to taking only basic lessons."*

The Regulation on Special Education Services (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018b) stipulated that students with special needs must receive support in resource rooms in line with their educational needs. Therefore, it must be ensured that special needs students receive support in resource rooms not only for the courses in which they feel inadequate, but also to enable them to develop their existing skills.

Another finding of the study concerned those responsible for the lesson selection in RRs, and also who the special needs students wanted as being responsible for their course selection. Of the participants, 11 **stated that their school principals or teachers (i.e., school employees) were responsible**, whilst six **stated their parents and/or themselves, two stated both school employees and their parents and/or themselves**, and three **stated that they did not know who was responsible for the lessons selected**.

The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K2: *"We had a teacher. He said, 'You will have difficulties in those lessons; they are difficult lessons. So, you must take these lessons.' That's why I take these lessons."*

K5: *"Last year, the principal asked us, 'Which lessons do you want to take the most? Which lessons are you happy with?' We told him about the lessons."*

K19: *"My teacher or my parents. I mean, my parents [make the decision] with my teacher."*

K8: *"If I am not good [at a subject], I tell my teachers in private, so they select the lessons."*

K15: *"My elder sister."*

K20: *"Usually my mother and teacher discussed [about the course selection]. They also asked me before making a decision."*

K3: *"I don't know."*

The participants usually expressed two opinions about who they believed should be responsible for the course selection in RRs. Eight of the participants **stated that those currently responsible should continue**, whilst 14 **stated that different people should be responsible for the course selection**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K14: *"I want the teachers to select the courses. Because teachers know better about what students should learn."*

Also, participant K19, whose parents and teacher selected the courses together, said:

K19: *"My teacher or my parents. I mean, my parents [make the decision] with my teacher. Let it be the same."*

In terms of the participants who **stated that other people should be responsible for their course selection**, their opinions were expressed as follows:

K2: *"I want to take part [in the lesson selection]. I want to be asked [about which lessons to select]."*

K15: *"[If I were to select the lessons] I would select Math and Science courses. My sister already helps me [in these lessons], but I want to do them myself."*

K21: *"I think my mother [should be responsible for the lessons selection]. I mean, my mother knows better than me. Also, she knows me better than most other people."*

In summary, as stated in the literature (Talley, 2017), regardless of the individual needs of students, RR education mostly contains activities such as the teaching of new subjects as well as reviewing subjects, solving problems, taking tests, and playing games etc. Also, students receive support only in academic lessons, whilst their sports or artistic abilities are left unaddressed. However, it is considered that receiving training in both the arts and in sports will also help students, especially those with learning difficulties, to better cope with academic failure and any resultant negative feelings (Güzel-Özmen, 2008). Therefore, first of all, students' opinions about lessons selection in RRs should also be sought. The findings of the current study show that teachers or parents generally are involved in the lesson selection process. However, the Regulation on Special Education Services stipulates that decisions concerning students should be made by the IEP Team, which should also include the student (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018b).

3.2. Theme 2. Students' Opinions and Experiences of RR Physical Characteristics

The participant students were asked about their resource room settings, whether they were pleased with the setup, and how else they would want their resource rooms to be.

Eight of the participants **stated that they receive RR education in the school library, eight stated in an empty school classroom, three stated in the teacher's room, two said in a classroom only used for brain games or in the IT classroom, and one stated**

in a RR. A total of 16 students **stated that they were pleased with their RR settings.** The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K2: *"I receive resource room education in the teacher's room. It's just me and my teacher. It is very interesting this way. I feel special."*

K13: *"Brain games classroom. I like this place very much."*

However, six of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction as follows:

K16: *"The teachers' room. The teachers come and go; we can't focus [on the lessons]."*

K9: *"Here in the library... All the students with special needs at the same time and in the same place. A teacher is there [teaching a lesson to a student], a teacher is here, and I have my own teacher here teaching me lessons."*

K22: *"We usually receive educational support in the school library, but if the library is full [with other students], then we can use the canteen or the teacher's room or sports room. I would be more pleased if we had a few resource rooms or a few more libraries. We would be more comfortable. It [the library] is quite crowded and noisy. I can't focus. When we are in the teachers' room, the teachers get angry with us [for having our lessons there]. We have lessons outside. We have benches and tables in the school garden. If they are free, we have lessons there. But it's both cold in the garden and also noisy because of the physical education lessons."*

The majority of the participants stated that they were satisfied with the place where they received their educational support. However, when asked about how they want their resource rooms to be, they mostly stated that their RRs were inadequate. Accordingly, 17 of the participants **wanted their RRs to be more comfortable, technological, aesthetic, and fun.** The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K9: *"[I want] computers, a smartboard, books, and a small bookcase [in the RR]."*

K21: *"I would put things like cushions on the chairs."*

Three of the participants stated that they want their RRs to be quiet places with no distractors:

K11: *"I think our RR should be quiet and comfy."*

Three of the participants wanted a special RR for one person. Two of these participants expressed their views as follows:

K16: *"I would want it to be for one person. For only one person."*

K22: *"I would be glad if there were special RRs."*

Three of the participants did not express any ideas, or else stated that no special RR setup was considered necessary in their opinion.

Due to their purposes, RRs in schools should include certain features. A manual regarding Resource Rooms was published in 2018 (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018a) which contained detailed descriptions about the required size of RRs, and the necessary safety precautions to be applied in RRs, and equipment that they should contain. The findings of the current study were found to be consistent with the literature, and indicate that most schools do not have classrooms specifically appointed as RRs, and that the physical characteristics of these rooms are considered inappropriate for usage as RRs (Aydın, 2015; Çağlar, 2017; Semiz, 2018).

3.3 Theme 3. Students' Opinions and Experiences of RR Working Hours

The participant students were asked questions in order to determine what they thought about RR working hours. A total of 19 students **stated that they received educational support in RRs during normal school hours**, whilst three **stated attending outside of normal school hours**. When asked whether or not they were pleased with the RR hours available to them, all of the participant students **stated that they were pleased with the RR working hours**. When they were subsequently asked why they were pleased, eight of them **stated that educational support after school hours would be tiring for them, that they would have no free time, and that they were happy with receiving their educational support during school hours**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K1: *"It would not be useful after school because our brains get tired."*

K2: *"It is better [to receive educational support] during school hours because otherwise I would not have any free time."*

Six of the students **stated that they travel home by school bus or that they have afterschool courses to attend; so, they were happy with the educational support being provided during normal school hours**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K6: *"We have afterschool courses [so cannot receive educational support after school]."*

Six of the participants **stated that they would prefer to be in their own general education classroom, and thereby not miss their normal classes and/or be with their friends.** One sample statement from a participant about this is as follows:

K21: *"I think it is better [to receive educational support] after school because, in this way, I don't miss out on my other classes."*

Five of the participants **stated that they were pleased to receive educational support in RRs during school hours because they did not want to be in the general education classroom and/or with their other friends:**

K9: *"I want it [to receive educational support] during school hours. It would be better for me to just be in RR rather than in the general education classroom. It is better to be outside [the general education classroom] during class hours."*

K11: *"I want it [to receive educational support] during school hours. Because I have difficulty in understanding the subject [in the general education classroom]. I sometimes attend the resource room; I learn better in my lessons there."*

The findings of the current research suggest that the majority of the participants receive educational support during school hours, and that they are pleased with this arrangement. According to the literature, the fact that students with special needs feel inadequate when attending lessons in general education classrooms, when compared to their peers, and achieve greater academic success in RRs is one of the main reasons why students are happy receiving educational support during normal school hours (Vaughn and Klingner, 1998).

3.4. Theme 4. Students' opinions and experiences of their relationships with their peers and teachers in RRs

Questions were asked to the participants about their relationships with their other classmates (normally developing students). Eight of the participants **stated that they had good relations with them.** The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K5: *"They have positive opinions [about RR education]. Because [when we are in the resource room] both they and we better understand the subjects."*

Eight of the students **stated that their relationships with their other (normally developing) classmates were negative.** They expressed their views on the subject as follows:

K11: *"They call me... they call me retarded."*

K7: *"They don't play with me. I am always alone during breaks. They have never played with me since the first grade. But in the painting lesson, they ask me to paint for them."*

Six of the participants **said they did not know the opinions of their friends.**

K1: *"I don't know [what they think]."*

The students were also asked about their relationships with their teachers. **All of the students expressed very positive opinions about their relationships with their teachers.** Some of the students expressed their opinions as follows:

K5: *"Our teacher is doing very good things for us, and takes good care of us."*

K4: *"I love my teacher; she is so sweet and helpful. Once, she had helped me with problems with my sibling, and with my family. She helped me with my psychology."*

In summary, it can be said that the relationships between students who receive educational support in RRs and their normally developing peers were found to vary. Although some of the students experienced problems with their academic achievement in the general education classroom, they preferred to spend more time with their classmates because of their good relations with them. However, some students prefer to spend their whole school time in RRs due to their peers' negative attitudes or because they were exposed to peer bullying. All of the participants stated that they had good relationships with their teachers. Besides, some students stated that their educational support teacher also cared about their personal problems, as well.

3.5. Theme 5. Students' Opinions and Experiences of the Contribution of RRs to Their Academic Achievement, Plus Their General Thoughts About RRs

Questions were asked to the participants in order to determine their opinions about the contribution of RRs to their academic achievement. A total of 17 participants **stated that RRs contributed to their academic achievement.** Some sample statements from these participants are as follows:

K3: *"It [the educational support received in RR] is useful. I started attending RRs in the last year of secondary school. Before that, I got low marks in the exams, but after RR, my marks in, for example, Math or Literature exams, got better."*

K8: *"I used to have difficulty in solving fraction questions in Math, but now I solve all the fraction questions in exams."*

K14: *"I used to be quite bad at, for example, reading. I could read only one page in one lesson. Now, I can read three-four pages in 15 minutes."*

Five of the participants **stated that RR did not contribute to their academic achievement in courses they took in the general education classroom:**

K16: *"I get good grades here [in RR] and bad grades there [in the general education classroom]... I understand the lessons here, but I don't understand there."*

K9: *"The lessons are easier here [in RR] than there [in the general education classroom]. I am confused there. I don't fully understand the subjects there."*

To learn the participants' general thoughts about the educational support they receive in RR, they were asked, "What do you generally think about receiving educational support in RR?" a total of 20 participants **stated that it was useful and beneficial**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K2: *"I am pleased with it [receiving educational support in RR]. Others take an exam altogether, but I take my exam separately. And our [RR] teachers help us, may Allah bless them. For this reason, it is useful to me."*

K4: *"It is good. Why? Because they [exams] are easier here. Teacher S... also helps us a lot [in exams]. He gives us exams again [if we fail], he prepares easy exams for us."*

K6: *"I think it is good because it helps students like me and students with worse scores [in their lessons]."*

Also, two of the students were indecisive, and did not provide a clear answer:

K15: *"Actually, I don't know. I sometimes think about why I receive educational support in RR. I sometimes think it is good."*

As a result, the majority of the participants held positive opinions about receiving educational support in RRs, and consider that it contributes to their academic achievement. The reason for this is thought to be, as reported by some studies in the literature, easier for special needs students to achieve academic achievement within RRs, that they have fun there, and that they receive the educational support they need in RRs (Adams-Byers, Whitsell, and Moon, 2004; Vaughn and Klingner, 1998).

3.6. Theme 6. Students' Suggestions About RRs

Since one of the purposes of the current study is also to increase the quality of the educational support provided in RRs, the participant students were asked for their suggestions about RRs. Accordingly, five of the participants **stated that they wanted a classroom that is dedicated only for the provision of RR education**. The participants expressed their opinions as follows:

K4: *"A classroom of our own."*

K9: *"A [resource] room for one person. Then, [I want to] stay outside [in the school garden] when not in the resource room."*

Three of the participants **stated that there should be a computer in RRs:**

K8: *"For example, a computer would be good."*

K11: *"I would love to solve questions on the tablet."*

Two of the participants **stated that there should be a different grading system for students receiving educational support in RRs:**

K2: *"If it [the highest score] is 50 for normal students, then it should be 40 for them [students with special needs]."*

Two of the participants **stated that RRs should be quiet and simple, for example:**

K11: *"It will [should] be a quiet place, a more beautiful place, where no one will make any noise."*

Two of the participants **suggested that there should be more additional RR working hours:**

K14: *"For example, take five lessons a day. It could be seven, eight hours a day."*

K22: *"I mean, my friends attend an afterschool course every day, but I attend RR only one day a week, I mean only three classes a week. Maybe it could have been a bit longer."*

In addition, K22 **stated that there should be coordination between the RR teacher and the general education classroom teachers:**

K22: *"Maybe it would be better for me to learn lessons in my general education class, but I love both my class teacher and my RR teacher, OK, but maybe it will be easier (to learn lessons) in RR and the exams... Teachers teach the same subject in different ways, and I am confused. And when my RR teacher tells it in another way, I am really confused."*

Eleven of the participants did not make any suggestions.

K11: *"I can't think of anything."*

K5: *"I have no suggestions because our teacher is doing very good things for us and we can think of such good things and not bad things (about our teacher). (Our teacher) takes good care of us."*

The suggestions of the students are in line with the problems about inclusive education, and RRs reported by relevant studies (Aydın, 2015; Çağlar, 2017; Güven and Gürsel, 2014; Kış, 2013; Nar, 2017; Pemik, 2017; Semiz, 2017). Accordingly, we can say that physical characteristics of RRs, lack of equipment, grading system, lack of cooperation between teachers are some of the problems that the students mentioned regarding RR education. Therefore, for the educational support in RR to be effective, the suggestions highlighted in the literature and expressed by the students should be taken into consideration.

4. Discussion and Suggestions

A comparative or descriptive analysis of the study based on results, on previously studies, etc. The results should be presented in a logical sequence, given the most important findings first and addressing the stated objectives. The number of tables and figures should be limited to those absolutely needed to confirm or contest the premise of the study. The authors should deal only with new or important aspects of the results obtained. Material from the Results section should not be repeated, nor new material introduced. The relevance of the findings in the context of existing literature or contemporary practice should be addressed.

The current study was conducted in order to determine the experiences of students with special needs regarding RRs. The findings of the study revealed the students' opinions about the courses held in RRs, the physical characteristics of RRs, the RR working hours, their relationships with their peers and teachers, as well as their general thoughts and suggestions about RRs.

Accordingly, the first finding of the study related to the courses taken by special needs students in RRs. The students usually learn new subjects or review prior subjects, solve problems, and undertake activities in RRs. During the classes held in RRs, teachers, considering the individual characteristics of their students, simplify the subject matter as necessary (Vural and Yıkmiş, 2008) and students usually engage in problem-solving activities. Another notable finding regarding the lessons held in RRs was that only one of the participants received educational support in the areas of sports or art lessons. However, it is especially considered that gifted students should receive educational support in line with their talents (Bedur et al., 2015), non-academic or otherwise. Furthermore, it is thought that in addition to gifted students, students in other diagnostic groups should also receive educational support according to their wishes and talents. Such educational support would not only contribute to their well-being, but also increase their levels of self-confidence. In order to ensure that students take appropriate courses according to their abilities, interests, and wishes, all stakeholders, including school

employees who assess the students, parents who know their children better than anyone else, and the students themselves should take part in efficient IEP meetings in order to arrive at jointly-formed decisions (Öztürk and Eratay, 2010). However, the student interviews revealed that rather than making joint decisions, it is either school employees or their parents alone who upon which courses the student will receive. In addition, some students even stated that they did not know who was responsible for their course selection, which is a finding also reported by other studies (e.g., Vaughn and Klingner, 1998). Some of the participants stated that they wanted to be involved in the course selection process. Therefore, it is considered that student involvement in the process, along with other stakeholders, would make educational support in RRs more efficient.

Arranging the right physical environment for special needs students in RRs and inclusive classrooms is of paramount importance. However, when considering the opinions of the participant students, educational support was not always provided within appropriate settings, as specified in the Regulation on Special Education Services (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [Turkish Ministry of National Education], 2018b). Students reported usually receiving educational support in school libraries, teachers' rooms, or in classrooms usually dedicated for other purposes. This situation, regarded as a problem by both RR students and teachers alike, may result in degradation of RR educational quality. This finding from the current research has also been reported by other studies in the national literature (Bedur et al., 2015; Çağlar, 2017; Nar, 2017; Semiz, 2018).

Another finding of the current study related to the RR working hours. Most of the students interviewed stated that they received educational support in RRs during normal school hours, and that they were satisfied with this situation. This finding is considered to be consistent with the literature (Vaughn and Klingner, 1998). Students with special needs, students with poor academic achievement, and gifted students prefer to be educated within environments where they can more easily accomplish the required level of academic achievement, and thereby feel good about themselves (Adams-Byers et al., 2004). One reason why students prefer to attend RRs during school hours might be that it is easier for them in terms of academic achievement in RRs than in general education classrooms (Vaughn and Klingner, 1998). Also, RR students' negative relationships with their normally developing peers might be seen as another reason. As can be inferred from the interviews in the current study, most students have good relations with their peers, while some face negative attitudes. Previous studies have also reported that children with special needs can be additionally exposed to peer bullying (Luciano and Savage, 2007). On the other hand, it has also been reported in the literature that students with special needs may prefer general education classrooms since they find it easier to make friends in such an environment (Vaughn and Klingner, 1998). Although the participants in the current study held different opinions about their relationships with their peers, they all agreed that they had good relationships with their teachers. This finding may be attributable to the close relationships established between RR students and RR teachers. Efficient and quality RR-based education can enable students with special needs to self-develop in areas where they otherwise lack success, and to improve in their abilities

where they would otherwise have limited opportunities in general education classrooms. The findings of the current study indicate that the majority of the participants consider that RR-based education, which they believe to be both useful and effective, contributes to their academic achievement. Considering the literature, some previous studies have reported on the positive opinions held by students about RRs (Vaughn and Klingner, 1998), as well as studies that reported negative findings (Talley, 2017; Vaughn and Bos, 1987). However, in the current study, negative opinions, though very few, were also expressed by the student participants. The final finding of the current study consists of students' suggestions with regards to RR-based education. The participant students' suggestions are in line with problems reported as being associated with RRs by other relevant studies (e.g., Çağlar, 2017; Semiz, 2018). Accordingly, the physical characteristics of RRs, lack of equipment, grading system, and lack of cooperation between teachers were some of the common problems mentioned by the students regarding their RR education. Therefore, for educational support in RRs to be effective, the suggestions highlighted in the literature and also expressed by the participant students of the current study should be taken into consideration.

The current study can be considered as having certain limitations. First, the participants were not evenly distributed according to their type of special need. Future research could be held with a more equal number of special needs students from each diagnostic group. In addition, students belonging to different diagnostic groups, such as hearing impaired or those diagnosed with a mood disorder could be included in the study. However, the researcher in the current study failed to reach RR students in different diagnostic groups that were able to answer the pertinent interview questions. Another limitation of the current study was that only students with special needs were interviewed. Teachers, parents, and normally developing students, among others, could be included as participant group in future studies. However, since no other studies had previously determined the opinions of the aforementioned stakeholders regarding RRs, and since no other study to date has determined the opinions of students with special needs in different diagnostic groups, the researcher purposely elected to maintain focus only upon the student sample included in the current study.

Considering the findings of the research, it can be suggested that the physical environment and equipment of RRs should be prioritized in order to assure the efficient provision of RR-based education to special needs students. In addition, efforts should be made to foster social acceptance so that positive relationships can be developed between normally developing students and those with special needs. To this end, steps should be taken to help the wider student population to develop empathy through meetings, social events, or jointly held activities. Also, the IEP team should be sufficiently active in the process of providing RR teachers with the requisite knowledge about special education services, and to encourage coordination and cooperation between RR teachers and general education classroom teachers. In addition, all members of the IEP team should be consulted when making decisions that impact the student. Finally, new regulations

should be developed and introduced for the assessment of student achievement levels in RRs.

To contribute to the literature and to improve the general quality of RR-based education, future research should aim to determine the views of all stakeholders. Future studies could aim to enroll a higher number of participants, with a greater diversity of student population that include interviews held separately with each diagnostic group. The observation method could also be used as a data collection tool, or a scale-based tool could be developed as part of a quantitative research study.

The current study concludes that special needs students mostly receive educational support as part of their academic (basic/culture) courses in RRs; that they usually learn new subjects or review prior learned subjects; that instead of the IEP team, it is either the students' parents or their teachers alone who are involved in the course selection process; that the students also want to be involved in this process; that they are mostly pleased with the current RR settings, but still want dedicated RRs in schools; that gifted students prefer attending RRs outside of normal school hours, while others prefer attending during school hours as they face difficulties learning lessons in general education classrooms; that students have varying opinions about their peer relationships; that those who express negative opinions about their peer relationships were exposed to peer bullying; that they have good relationships with their teachers; and that they consider RRs to be an efficient educational practice that positively contributes to their academic achievement.

About the Author

Mine Kizir, PhD, is an assistant professor in Special Education Department at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Turkey. Her research areas are autism spectrum disorders, family education, imitation skills education, and early intervention. Her Orcid is orcid.org/0000-0001-8801-5693.

References

- Adams-Byers, J., Whitsell, S. S., & Moon, S. M. (2004). Gifted students' perceptions of the academic and social/emotional effects of homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48(1), 7-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177%2F001698620404800102>
- Aydın, A. (2015). *Teachers' opinions on educational services provided to students with mental disabilities in resource rooms*. Unpublished master's thesis. Abant İzzet Baysal University, Bolu.
- Batu, E. S. (2000). Inclusive education, support services, and activities for the preparation of students for inclusive education. *Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences Journal of Special Education*, 2(04), 35-45. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/159242>

- Batu, S. (2013). Inclusive education and special education support services. In İ. H. Diken (Ed.), *Students in need of special education and special education* (pp. 89-107). Ankara, Turkey: Pegem.
- Bedur, S., Bilgiç, N., & Taşlıdere, E. (2015). An evaluation of the educational support services provided to gifted students. *HAYEF: Journal of Education*, 12(1), 159-175. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/79fd661775742a661ee444dab7ac8d30/1?cbl=1796367&pq-origsite=gscholar>
- Çağlar, N. (2017). *An investigation of the opinions of school administrators and teachers about resource rooms in primary schools*. (Unpublished master's thesis, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey). Retrieved from <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>
- Dash, M. (2005). *Education of exceptional children*. New Delhi, India: Atlantic.
- Dowson, C. R. (2007). Developing inclusive schools in Hong Kong. In S. N. Phillipson (Ed.), *Learning Diversity in the Chinese Classroom: Contexts and Practice for Students with Special needs* (pp. 399-430). Hong Kong: HKU Press.
- Falkmer, M., Anderson, K., Joosten, A., & Falkmer, T. (2015). Parents' perspectives on inclusive schools for children with autism spectrum conditions. *International journal of disability, development and education*, 62(1), 1-23. doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2014.984589
- Güven, D., & Gürsel, O. (2014). Teachers' opinions on the assessment of academic achievement of students with mental disability integrated into primary education. *Elementary Education Online*, 13(1), 109-129.
- Güzel-Özmen, R. (2008). Students with learning difficulties. In İ. H. Diken (Ed.), *Children in need of special education and special education* (pp. 333-367). Ankara: Pegem.
- Kıış, H. (2013). *Opinions of school counsellors and special education classroom teachers on resource rooms*. Unpublished master's thesis. Abant İzzet Baysal University, Bolu.
- Klingner, J. K., Vaughn, S., Shay Schumm, J., Cohen, P., & Forgan, J. W. (1998). Inclusion or pull-out: Which do students prefer? *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31(2), 148-158. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002221949803100205>
- Luciano, S., & Savage, R. S. (2007). Bullying risk in children with learning difficulties in inclusive educational settings. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 22(1), 14-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0829573507301039>
- McNamara, B. E. (1989). *The resource room: A guide for special educators*. Albany, NY: SUNY.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2006). *Özel Eğitim Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği [Regulation on Special Education Services]*. Retrieved from <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2006/05/20060531-2.htm>
- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2015). *Destek Eğitim Odası Açılması [Setting up of resource rooms]*. Retrieved from http://orgm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2015_10/08112732_destekeitimodasgenelge.pdf

- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2018a). *Destek Eğitim Odası [Resource rooms]*. Retrieved from https://orgm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2016_08/03045051_destek_egitim_oda_si_kilavuz.pdf
- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2018b). *Özel Eğitim Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği [Regulation on Special Education Services]*. Retrieved from http://orgm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2018_07/09101900_ozel_egitim_hizmetleri_yonetmeligi_07072018.pdf
- Nar, B. (2017). *Resource rooms for gifted students: Self-efficacy and opinions of classroom teachers*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, İstanbul Aydın University, İstanbul). Retrieved from <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>
- Olçay-Gül, S., & Vuran, S. (2015). The opinions of students with special needs attending regular classrooms and the problems they face. *Science and Education*, 40(180). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15390/EB.2015.4205>
- Öztürk, C. Ç., & Eratay, E. (2010). Determination of the opinions of the teachers of developmentally disabled students attending the education application school about the Individualized Education Program. *Abant İzzet Baysal University, Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 10(2), 145-159. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/16711>
- Peck, C. A., Staub, D., Gallucci, C., & Schwartz, I. (2004). Parent perception of the impacts of inclusion on their nondisabled child. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 29(2), 135-143.
- Pemik, K. (2017). Opinions of school administrators and teachers about the education provided in resource rooms for gifted students. Unpublished master's thesis, Marmara University, İstanbul.
- Rose, K. K., Barahona, D., & Muro, J. (2017). Peer perceptions of students receiving pull-out services in elementary school: A multi-age study. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(4), 376-388. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.119732>
- Sabbah, S., & H. Shanaah, (2010). The efficiency of resources rooms for special needs in government schools from headmasters and teachers of resources rooms and educational counselors perspective. *An-Najah Univ. J. Res. Humanities*, 24(8), 2187-2226. Retrieved from <https://scholar.najah.edu/publication/journal-article/efficiency-resources-rooms-special-needs-government-schools-headmasters>
- Semiz, N. (2018). *Determination of the opinions of teachers and parents about resource rooms for students with special needs*. (Unpublished master's thesis, Abant İzzet Baysal University, Bolu, Turkey). Retrieved from <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>
- Somaily, H., Al-Zoubi, S., & Bani Abdel Rahman, M. (2012). Parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards resource room. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, 1(217), 1-5. Retrieved from http://ijoe.org/v1/IIJE_01_v1_i1_2012.pdf

- Talley, M. (2017). *A phenomenological study of ninth grade students' with disabilities perceptions of educational settings*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Liberty University, Virginia, USA). Retrieved form <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=2492&context=doctoral>
- Tortop, H. S., & Dinçer, S. (2016). Opinions about resource rooms of classroom teachers working with gifted students in resource rooms. *Journal of Gifted Education Research*, 4(2), 11-28
- Valeo, A. (2008). Inclusive education support systems: Teacher and administrator views. *International Journal of Special Education*, 23(2), 8-16.
- Vaughn, S., & Bos, C. S. (1987). Knowledge and perception of the resource room: The students' perspective. *Journal of Learning disabilities*, 20(4), 218-223. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002221948702000404>
- Vaughn, S., & Klingner, J. K. (1998). Students' perceptions of inclusion and resource room settings. *The Journal of Special Education*, 32(2), 79-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002246699803200202>
- Vural, M., & Yıkış, A. (2008). Determination of the activities of teachers of inclusive classes for the adaptation of teaching methods. *Abant İzzet Baysal University, Journal of the Faculty of Education*. 8(2), 141-159. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/16657>
- Walsh, M., & Wiggins, L. (2003). *Introduction to research*. Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Thornes.
- Yang, Y., Gentry, M., & Choi, Y. O. (2012). Gifted students' perceptions of the regular classes and pull-out programs in South Korea. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 23(3), 270-287. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1932202X12451021>
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2008). *Qualitative research methods in the social sciences* (6th ed.). Ankara, Turkey: Seçkin.
- Zionts, P., Zionts, L., & Simpson, R. L. (2002). *Emotional and behavioural problems: A handbook for understanding and handling students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Ziadat, A. H. (2014). Assessment of the effectiveness of the special education resource rooms in Qasabat Al Salt Directorate of Education-Al Salt/Jordan. *Journal of Applied Sciences*, 14(20), 2552-2560. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3923/jas.2014.2552.2560>

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Special Education Research shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).