Examination of Roma Primary School Students' Sense of School Belonging

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Abstract

Examining the sense of belonging among Roma elementary school pupils is the goal of this study. 121 fourth-grade Roma kids and 44 parents made up the study's participants. One of the mixed-method designs, the convergent mixed design, was chosen for the investigation. Quantitative and qualitative data are gathered concurrently in this design. Analyses and descriptions of quantitative data come first, followed by analyses and interpretations of qualitative data. Selçuk and Güner's (1999) Sense of Belonging Scale was applied to Roma students in the study's quantitative component. One of the qualitative research designs, the case study design, was applied in the qualitative section. 10 open-ended questions developed by consulting experts were posed to parents of Roma as part of the qualitative dimension. Along with the quantitative results, the responses from the parents were analyzed and evaluated. The study's findings support the notion that Roma primary school kids have a strong sense of school belonging. Additionally, it was discovered that girls had a considerably higher degree of school belonging than boys.

Keywords: Equal opportunity in education, Roma students, Sense of school belonging

Introduction

The most important responsibility of the social state is to provide equal rights to all its citizens in all areas in accordance with the principle of equality, regardless of language, religion, color, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, health, or educational status. One of these rights is education. In order for human beings to lead a life worthy of their dignity in society, all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic level, gender, ethnic origin, language, religion, etc., must receive a certain level of education. For this reason, the phenomenon of the "social state" is emphasized on every platform in order to ensure that the right to education is recognized as the most fundamental human right and provided equally to all individuals. For the same reason, all social states consider education among their primary duties and aim to ensure that all citizens receive education under equal conditions.

The right to education is the most fundamental right that all members of society should enjoy equally. In many countries around the world, some groups of people are not able to enjoy this right properly due to problems in the education system, socioeconomic disadvantages, social stigmatization, exclusion, and marginalization. Roma are one of these communities (Çetin, 2017). Since Roma are always characterized by aggression, violence, crime, and pollution, they face prejudice in the society they live in (Bhopal, 2011) and are most often subjected to discrimination and exclusion by others (Bhopal & Myers, 2016; Cudworth, 2008; Derrington, 2016; Hamilton, 2018; Macura-Milovanović, Munda, & Peček, 2013; Tor, 2017). The main cultural problem Roma face in terms of education is that they do not send their children to school (Bedmar & León, 2012; Bhopal, 2011; Derrington, 2016). Roma students therefore face serious problems accessing education. A significant number of Roma children either do not attend school at all or drop out (European Economic and Social Committee, 2009). Where access is provided, they face unemployment and exclusion, even if they have a good education (Rodgers, 1995). For this reason, Roma parents seem reluctant to send their children to school. As a result, it is not possible to improve the situation (Bhopal and Myers, 2016; Gould, 2017; İlik, 2016). Since Roma students, like other children, are a part of society, their sense of belonging to school was a matter of curiosity and the inspiration for this study.

General Information on Roma

It is generally believed that the Roma dispersed from their homeland in India between the 5th and 15th centuries (Liebich, 2007). There is no clear and precise information in the literature on why the Roma left their homeland in India (Kenrick, 2006). Fraser (2005) argues that if a people is a group of individuals with a common culture, language, and ancestry who live together and who can be easily distinguished from other human communities by certain characteristics, then the Roma lost their identity as a people a long time ago and became differentiated over time. Thus, although the Roma share a common ethnic origin in terms of linguistic and morphological characteristics, they cannot be called a homogeneous people due to the existence of many subgroups (Halwachs, 2005).

Although many different views have been put forward about the origins of the Roma, their origins have only been identified following recent research based on their language (Fraser, 2005). Roma are present in almost every region of the world, with more than 10 million of them living in Europe (Bačlija, 2008). Arayıcı (2008) states that there are approximately 30-40 million Roma worldwide, of which 10-15 million live in European countries. With this number, Roma constitute the largest minority in Europe and, at the same time, the most vulnerable ethnic group (Bobakova et al., 2015).

Historically marginalized in every country in the world, the mass extermination of the Roma occurred in Germany during the reign of Adolf Hitler. Glajar and Radulescu (2008) state that during the so-called "Roma Genocide" in Germany, some 500,000 Roma were exterminated, and according to different sources, up to two million, either by burning them in gas chambers or by using them as guinea pigs in medical experiments (cited in Kurtuluş, 2012). Going even further, the Nazis went back three generations from their time and massacred everyone of Roma ancestry. Years after these massacres, the 3rd World Roma Congress convened in Göttingen in 1981, with the massacre of Roma in Nazi Germany as the top agenda item. At this congress, Roma demanded reparations from Germany, but their demands went unanswered (Hancock, 2002).

In Europe, Roma are seen as a marginalized community (Çetin, 2017), and they live their lives struggling against this prejudice. The invented myths about Roma as lazy, thieves, kidnappers, parasites, etc. are used as a basis for justifying these prejudices. These are all found in folk tales, beliefs, and proverbs within European culture that reinforce anti-Roma sentiments (Hancock, 1991, cited in Avara and Mascitelli, 2014). Roma are among the disadvantaged groups in the regions where they live, particularly in Europe. In all countries where they live, they face violence, exclusion, inequality, hate speech, and discrimination, as well as many problems in the areas of basic human rights such as health, education, housing, and employment.

The Importance of the Sense of Belonging to the School

The importance of students' sense of belonging to school, its development, and its close relationship with other returns of education have been the subject of many studies, especially in foreign literature. Most of these studies focus on the effect of a sense of school belonging on students' academic achievement. Adelabu (2007), Anderman (2002), Booker (2006), Cemalcılar (2010), Finn (1989), Goodenow (1992a, 1992b, 1993a), and Osterman (2000) revealed that a sense of belonging to school is positively related to high achievement, academic motivation, and academic self-efficacy and negatively related to school dropout. Anderman (2002) found positive relationships between students' sense of belonging to school and their grade point averages, while Hagborg (1994) found that students with a high sense of belonging to school had higher academic achievement and were more favorable towards their schools. A similar study was conducted by Isakson and Jarvis (1999), and as a result of the study, students with a high sense of belonging to their schools showed higher academic achievement.

Method

This chapter provides information about the inspiration phase of the research, the research model, the participants, and the methods and techniques used in data collection and analysis.

Inspiration Phase

In the process of determining the research topic, the researcher and the counselor exchanged ideas on various issues. In these interviews, especially socioeconomically disadvantaged primary school students' sense of belonging to school was emphasized. The school where the researcher teaches is located in a neighborhood where Roma families live. According to the researcher's observations, children from these families feel the difficulties of life more and are excluded, stigmatized, or marginalized by other children. In addition, the researcher's school has a large number of these students (45 percent). In addition, according to the year-end statistics in the e-school system, almost all (94 percent) of the students who were absent, dismissed, or dropped out of school due to being out of school age were Roma students.

As the researcher worked as a classroom teacher and administrator in this school for many years, she had the opportunity to get to know the students, their families, and their socio-economic and cultural conditions closely. During this process, the researcher observed that students who were absent or who dropped out of school were usually the children of Roma families. When starting primary school, Roma families strive to have their children enroll in a better school and in a class with a better teacher. At first, students attend school with excitement and enthusiasm. In the following period, however, the negative attitudes of the pupils towards school caught the attention of the researcher. This led him to ask the following questions:
:
-Why do Roma pupils who start primary school with great enthusiasm become absent or drop out later on?
-Why do these students not succeed academically overall?
-Why are children directed to work life at an early age?
-Why do parents marry off their children at an early age and break their ties with school?
In line with these questions, the researcher wondered about the effects of variables such as friends, teachers, etc. that connect Roma children to school, develop a sense of belonging in them, and motivate them to belong to school. In light of all these, the researcher decided to carry out this research in order to investigate in depth the situations that affect Roma children's belonging to school, to reveal their reasons, and, if possible, to discover ways to eliminate this situation.

Research Methodology

The mixed method was preferred. In mixed-method studies, quantitative and qualitative research approaches are used together. Patton (2002) stated that quantitative and qualitative approaches can be used together to examine a research problem in depth. In the mixed method, data are collected by using quantitative and qualitative approaches together to understand the problem of the research, and these data are analyzed and integrated (Creswell, 2012).

Accordingly, in the planning phase, we determined the problem statement for the research. Then we decided that the research could be conducted in a mixed model. In the implementation phase, we collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data. In the evaluation phase, we presented and reported the results of the research.

Mixed-method research, which is frequently used in educational research, is classified under four main headings: explanatory mixed method, parallel mixed method, embedded mixed method, and exploratory mixed method. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) state that phenomena and events are not simple and one-dimensional. Therefore, the researcher should use multiple methods to understand the phenomena and events. For a rich and holistic understanding of the truth, facts and events should be analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Thus, quantitative and qualitative methods were used together in this study in order to understand the research problem in depth. The quantitative and qualitative data obtained were analyzed by comparing and relating them.

Research Design

In this study, a convergent mixed method design, which is one of the mixed method designs, was used. Creswell and Creswell (2021) state that the purpose of this design is to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously in order to understand the research problem, to combine these data, and to use the results. The reason for this is that the weaknesses or deficiencies in one data form are balanced with the other data form in order to explain the research problem in detail. In this design, the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyzes the collected data separately, and compares the results with the analysis of both data sets. Then, he or she determines whether the results support each other or not. The researcher's direct comparison of the two data sets ensures the convergence of data sources.

In this design, the researcher gives equal priority to quantitative and qualitative data and collects quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously during the research. Finally, he or she compares these results to reveal whether the two data sets have similar or different results. This comparison can take different forms. The most common comparison approach is to present quantitative and qualitative results side by side in the findings section. For example, the researcher first presents the quantitative results and supports these results with qualitative quotations to confirm them. Another approach is to combine quantitative and qualitative data in a table. For this purpose, the researcher can show qualitative themes and quantitative statistical results in the columns that overlap with these topics. The third approach is to transform one of the data sets into a form that can be directly compared with the other. For example, the qualitative themes generated during the interview process are quantified and given scores according to their frequency. These scores are then compared with the scores in other measurement tools that deal with the same ideas in the themes. The power of the convergent mixed method design stems from the fact that the advantages of quantitative and qualitative data forms can be combined and used. Thus, while quantitative data provide generalizability, qualitative data provide information about themes, contexts, and environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). In this study, quantitative data were

supported by qualitative data, themes were formed, and quantitative and qualitative results were given side by side in the discussion section, which is the most common.

Quantitative Dimension

The researcher preferred to use the survey model in the quantitative dimension of this research because it is suitable for the subject and purpose of the research. In a universe consisting of many elements, the research model conducted on the whole universe or a group of samples taken from it in order to reach a general judgment about that universe is called a survey model. This approach is one that reveals a past or present situation as it exists without any change. Survey models conducted with large groups are studies in which an individual's attitude towards any phenomenon or event is investigated (Karasar, 2016). In general, the objectives in survey models are expressed with question sentences. The answers received from these questions are usually reported in the form of frequency degrees and percentages of the respondents. One of the important advantages of the survey model is that it gives us a lot of information about the findings we obtain from a sample consisting of many individuals (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). Researchers are interested in how the opinions or characteristics they obtain with these question sentences are distributed among the participants in the sample rather than what the source is (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). It shows the survey models defined by Karasar (2016, pp. 77-87). The researcher used the case study survey model, one of the survey models defined by Karasar (2016), in the quantitative dimension of this research because it is appropriate for the subject and purpose of the research.

Yin (1984) emphasizes that the survey model is a research method that investigates a current phenomenon in its own reality, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the content in which it is located are not clearly separated and where there is more than one data source (cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Karasar (2016) states that research conducted with the case study survey model provides more detailed and realistic information than research conducted with general survey models. Similarly, Hopkins (1980) states that survey models are frequently used in in-depth research of social units such as institutions, societies, groups, and individuals. In addition, the case study survey model can be used as a preliminary study to determine the important variables of the studies to be conducted with general survey models (Karasar, 2016). It is also known that the stages of case study research are the same as the stages of qualitative research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020).

In this study, the Sense of Belonging Scale developed by Selçuk and Güner (1999) was used to measure Roma primary school students' sense of belonging to their school. This scale consists of a single dimension and 24 items. The Sense of Belonging Scale is a Likert-type scale with three-stage answers as "Always", "Sometimes," and "Never." Before the scale was applied, expert opinions were obtained by consulting three faculty members together with the researcher's supervisor about the suitability of this scale for the purpose of the research. The experts stated that the questions on the scale in question could be used in the research since they were suitable for the purpose of the research.

Qualitative Dimension

In the qualitative part of this research, a case study design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. Yin (2009) states that a case study is needed in order to understand a complex social phenomenon in depth. Yin (2009) draws attention to the importance of "what, how, why, where, and who" questions in a case study and states that "what," "how," and "why" questions are used more frequently, especially in qualitative research conducted with a case study design.

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was developed in addition to Selçuk and Güner's (1999) scale. Before the implementation part of the study, a pilot study was conducted with two Roma parents to test the comprehensibility of the questions. The validity and reliability of the research were increased by adding the experiences of the parents about the children and the school to the answers given by the Roma students to the questions on the scale. The opinions of three faculty members from the field of educational sciences were taken about the content of the prepared questions, whether they serve the purpose of the research, their suitability in terms of the scope of the research, and their comprehensibility in terms of grammar rules. In line with the opinions received, one of the questions was removed on the grounds that it did not serve the purpose of the research. The number of questions was reduced from 15 to 10 by combining the questions with the same type of content. In addition, adjustments were made to the questions in terms of grammar and the comprehensibility of sentences. It was aimed at enriching the findings of the research by asking the parents of the students to tell about their children's experiences with their teachers at school. Participation in the study was voluntary. In this context, although an appointment was made for the interview, four parents did not come to the interview, postponing the appointment each time, and as a result, interviews could not be conducted with these parents.

Participants

The participants of this study were Roma fourth-grade primary school students and their parents who were studying in primary schools (five primary schools) with a high concentration of Roma students in Konya

province during the 2021-2022 academic year. In addition, some non-Roma students and their parents were also interviewed in order to create field notes. In addition, the views of teachers and administrators were sought in order to obtain information about the academic achievement, school and peer relationships, and school attendance of Roma students.

The criterion sampling method, which is one of the purposive sampling methods, was preferred in the selection of participants. The criterion sampling method is the creation of a sample from people, objects, events, or situations with the qualities determined in relation to the problem of the research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020). In accordance with the problem of the study, this method was preferred because the participants of the study consisted of Roma students and their parents.

Roma Students Participating in the Study

The research was conducted with 121 students—52 girls and 69 boys. Due to the high absenteeism of Roma students and their absence from school, the unwillingness of some students to participate in the research, and the lack of permission of some students' parents, not all Roma students in schools could be reached. Therefore, the research was conducted with a group of participants who were very difficult to reach. The problem of absenteeism was observed in all schools within the scope of the research. In fact, the classroom teachers interviewed stated that most of the Roma students in their classes were absent a lot during the year and that some of them came to school for a week at the beginning of the year and were never seen again. The reason for this was reported to be that boys were working in different jobs to contribute to the family budget and girls were helping their mothers with housework, taking care of younger siblings at home, and getting married at an early age. In addition, negative attitudes of teachers working in one school were also encountered. Except for this school, the administrators and teachers of all the other schools visited made the place, students, and parents ready for the interview. This situation was reflected in the researcher's diary dated March 7, 2022, as follows:

"The teachers of X primary school, where I went to do my practice, asked me why I was conducting such research, especially about Roma students. They asked why other students were not included in the research and whether they thought that this research would have negative effects on Roma students. They said that it would have a negative impact on their lessons and that the students would not want to be interviewed by me. Even though I told them that this was scientific research, that there were similar studies in the literature, that the research questions were not offensive to the students, and that the research would not have any negative effects on the students, none of the teachers in this school allowed me to interview the Roma students in their classes. Considering my voluntary participation in the research, I left this school without collecting data."

Table 1 presents the gender, education level, age, and occupation information of the parents who participated in the interviews within the scope of the research. As seen in Table 1, the participants in the qualitative part of the research consisted of a total of 44 parents, 25 male and 19 female. Nine of the male parents were primary school dropouts, seven were primary school graduates, two were secondary school graduates, four were secondary school dropouts, two were high school dropouts, and one was a high school graduate. Seven of the female parents were primary school dropouts, seven were primary school graduates, three were middle school dropouts, one was a middle school graduate, and one was a high school dropout. Twelve of the male parents are peddlers, nine are scrap dealers (paper, plastic, metal, and goods), two are real estate agents, one is a gallery owner, and one is an entertainment sector employee. All of the female parents are housewives. It was observed that the participating Roma parents were not very keen to be interviewed. However, when it was stated that the identity information of their children and themselves would be kept confidential, the participants answered the questions. For the sake of systematic organization, the interviewed parents and their children were coded with the same number. For example, S1 was used to symbolize "Student 1" and P1 was used to symbolize "Parent 1."

Table1: Roma Parents Participating in the Study Table

Sequence No	Gender	Education Level	Age	Job Occupation
P1	M	Primary school dropout	26	Scrap dealer
P2	M	Primary school dropout	28	Hawker
P3	M	Primary school dropout	25	Hawker
P4	M	Primary school	30	Scrap dealer
P5	F	Secondary school	23	Housewife
P6	M	High school	32	Property Agent
P7	F	Primary school	23	Housewife
P8	F	Primary school dropout	20	Housewife
P9	M	Primary school	37	Scrap dealer

P10	M	Primary school	33	Scrap dealer
P11	M	Secondary school dropout	28	Scrap dealer
P12	F	Primary school dropout	24	Housewife
P13	F	Primary school	25	Housewife
P14	M	Secondary school dropout	44	Entertainment sector
P15	F	Primary school	29	Housewife
P16	M	Primary school dropout	23	Hawker
K17	M	Primary school dropout	35	Hawker
P18	F	Primary school	27	Housewife
P19	M	Secondary school dropout	30	Hawker
P20	F	Primary school	25	Housewife
P21	M	Primary school dropout	29	Scrap dealer
P22	M	High school dropout	33	Car dealer
P23	F	Secondary school dropout	28	Housewife
P24	M	Secondary school	25	Hawker
P25	M	Secondary school dropout	30	Scrap dealer
P26	F	Primary school	27	Housewife
P27	M	Primary school dropout	32	Scrap dealer
P28	F	Primary school dropout	28	Housewife
P29	F	Primary school dropout	24	Housewife
P30	F	Primary school	35	Housewife
P31	M	Primary school	33	Hawker
P32	M	Secondary school dropout	28	Hawker
P33	F	Primary school dropout	28	Housewife
P34	F	Primary school dropout	25	Housewife
P35	F	Primary school dropout	29	Housewife
P36	M	Primary school	44	Hawker
P37	M	Primary school	26	Hawker
P38	F	High school dropout	25	Housewife
P39	F	Secondary school dropout	27	Housewife
P40	M	Primary school	30	Hawker
P41	M	Primary school dropout	25	Scrap dealer
P42	M	High school dropout	29	Tradesmen
P43	F	Secondary school dropout	30	Housewife
P44	M	Primary school dropout	41	Hawker

Data Collection

In the research, tools and techniques suitable for obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The "Sense of Belonging Scale," developed by Selçuk and Güner (1999), was used as the quantitative data collection tool. The scale consists of 24 items and one dimension. The scale was applied after obtaining the necessary permissions from the authors. In order to examine the factor structure of the Sense of Belonging Scale, exploratory factor analysis using the principal component analysis method was conducted. When the results of Barlett's test of sphericity were analyzed, it was seen that the data met the assumption of sphericity (χ^2 (276 = 2704.073, p < 0.001). As a result of the analysis, a one-factor structure with a KMO value of 0.88 and explaining 43.88% of the total variance was obtained. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency value of the Sense of Belonging Scale was calculated at 0.938. When the corrected item-total correlation values and the new Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values obtained when the item was deleted were examined, it was determined that all items on the scale worked at a good level and there was no item that needed to be removed from the scale.

For the qualitative part of the study, a semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions for Roma parents was used. Karasar (2016) defines semi-structured interviewing as a technique in which the

researcher prepares an interview form that includes the questions that the researcher plans to ask in advance and elaborates the participants' answers with probing questions according to the natural flow of the interview, allowing the individual to freely give the answers they want to the questions asked. In this study, the participants were also asked additional probing questions. These questions are given in brackets in the interview form. Before the quantitative data on the scale were collected from the students, they were chatted with, and it was aimed to obtain reliable and realistic data from them in this way. In the qualitative process, the answers to the questions in the semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions were evaluated as the data of the research. In addition, the researcher utilized observations, field notes, audio recordings, and conversational interviews to ensure data diversity. Field notes were also taken from non-Roma parents, students, teachers, and administrators. A case study is widely used in scientific research. A case study is the researcher's in-depth description of a phenomenon with certain boundaries over a certain period of time through various means (observation, interviews, visual and audio materials, documents, and reports) and revealing themes based on this situation (Creswell and Creswell 2021). In accordance with this definition, the opinions of the parents were obtained through the following semi-structured questions:

The questions asked of Roma parents during the parent interviews were as follows:
1. Why did you choose this school for your child's education?
2. What was the attitude of the school administration toward you when you enrolled your child in school?
3. How was the classroom teacher's behavior towards you and your child during the training?
4. What are your general opinions about the school your child attends? Would you prefer this school again?
5. Would you recommend the school where your child is studying to another friend's child? Why?
6. What are the most important qualities that the school your child attends provides for your child? Does the school fulfill your expectations? Why?
7. Have your children had any negative experiences at school? If so, tell us about them.
8. When your child comes home, what kind of information about school does he or she share with you? (positive and negative events with his or her friends, teacher, or school administration; winning and losing in class and school competitions)
9. How are your child's friendships? Does he/she bring his/her friends' home [for homework, for getting to know them, for dinner invitations]?
10. Are there any activities, practices, etc. that you would like teachers and administrators to carry out at school in order for your child to adopt the school?

Data collection is part of the research plan and the next stage of the research question. At this stage, researchers sometimes take part outside the process, and sometimes they are a part of the research. The participant researcher collects data from different sources that will illuminate the topic under investigation (Stringer, 2008). In the convergent mixed design, which is the method of this research, quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are used simultaneously (Creswell, 2012). The purpose and design of the research were taken into consideration in the use of the data collection tools employed in this research. In addition, the research was enriched by obtaining data by using various data collection techniques and was carried out in accordance with the quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches.

In the preparation of the interview questions, expert opinion was taken and questions were prepared to examine Roma students' sense of belonging to the school. For the implementation of the Semi-Structured Interview Form and the Sense of Belonging Scale, the researcher first obtained the necessary legal permissions from Necmettin Erbakan University and then from Konya Provincial Directorate of National Education. Afterwards, the researcher went to the schools to be interviewed with the school administrators and asked the parents to fill out the Parental Consent Form, and permission was obtained from them. The students were taken one by one to an empty classroom, library, or counseling room, and interviews were conducted with them. Thus, it was aimed at increasing the validity and reliability of the data. During the interviews, a preliminary conversation was held to get information about the students, and field notes were kept. These field notes were organized and presented in the "Findings" section. The questions on the scale were explained to the students one by one and asked verbally, and their answers were recorded.

In the research, pilot interviews were first conducted to test the comprehensibility of the parent interview questions. Afterwards, the feasibility of obtaining appropriate answers for the purpose of the research was tested, and then the questions were finalized and the interviews were started. Stewart and Cash (1985) state that the interview method is an interactive communication process in the form of asking and answering predetermined questions for a purpose.

Collecting Data from Students

In line with the purpose of the study, a chat environment consisting of current and family issues was created before the individual interviews with the students. In the meantime, information about the student and his or her

family was collected, and small field notes were obtained. Thus, the participants were ensured to be in a sincere environment. Afterwards, general information about the Sense of Belonging Scale was given, and the students were asked if there was any part that was not understood. Since some students did not want the interviews to be recorded with voice recorders, field notes were taken during the interviews with them. The interviews were conducted in the school library, the empty classroom, and the interview room of the counseling service. The questions on the scale were asked to the students one by one, and the answers were recorded by the researcher for reliability.

Collection of Data from Parents

Due to the nature of the research design, parent interviews were conducted simultaneously with student interviews. Before the interviews with the parents, the parents were briefly informed about the research and were informed that the interviews were voluntary by signing the Participant Consent Form. In order to prevent time constraints, interviews were conducted by making appointments with the volunteer parents. In this process, there were also parents who made an appointment but did not come. Open-ended questions consisting of 10 questions prepared in advance by taking expert opinion were asked in the interviews that started in a chat atmosphere with the parents who came to the appointment. In addition to the questions, the opinions of the parents were obtained by asking probing questions. Interviews with parents who had time constraints were recorded on a voice recorder with their permission. These interviews lasted 5 hours, 17 minutes, and 25 seconds in total, and 25 pages of raw data were obtained from these recordings.

Analyzing the Data

In the quantitative part of the research, SPSS was programmed. The descriptive results obtained from this analysis program are presented in tables in the relevant section. The content analysis method was used in the evaluation of the qualitative data in the research, and the findings were formed by analyzing the collected data in depth. The main purpose of content analysis is to identify the main concepts and relationships that can explain the data collected during the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The raw data obtained by transcribing the audio recordings of the audio-recorded parent interviews, the information collected from the interview forms, and the field notes were evaluated by the content analysis method.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

General Trends Related to Sense of Belonging to School

Firstly, the general tendency related to each statement in the Sense of Belonging Scale was examined. Afterwards, the answer to the question "How is the students' sense of belonging to school in general?" was sought. In addition, students' levels of sense of belonging to school were also compared according to gender factors. Table 2 presents the general results of the Sense of Belonging Scale.

Table 2. Results Related to Sense of Belonging Scale

	Statements	Never f (%)	Sometimes f (%)	Always f (%)
1.	I always receive sympathy and understanding from my teacher.	2 (1.7)	15 (12.4)	104 (86)
2.	I don't get along well with my friends.	88 (72.7)	22 (18.2)	11 (9.1)
3.	I'm very happy to be in this class.	2 (1.7)	10 (8.3)	109 (90.1)
4.	My friends don't understand me.	97 (80.2)	17 (14)	7 (5.8)
5.	I enjoy the class excursions very much	2 (1.7)	13 (10.7)	106 (87.6)
6.	If I had the opportunity, I would like to leave this school and go to another school.	111 (91.07)	10 (8.3)	---
7.	My friends share their secrets with me.	2 (1.2)	41 (33.9)	78 (64.5)
8.	I am afraid to talk to my teacher.	104 (86)	15 (12.4)	2 (1.7)
9.	I'm afraid of losing one of my friends and teachers.	2 (1.7)	16 (13.2)	103 (85.01)
10	My teacher is interested in everything I do in class.	4 (3.3)	42 (34.7)	75 (62)
11	I have trouble making friends in this class.	96 (79.3)	20 (16.5)	5 (4.1)

12	I miss my friends and teachers a lot during school holidays.	2 (1.7)	39 (32.2)	80 (66.01)
13	I am proud to be a student in this class.	2 (1.7)	19 (15.7)	100 (82.6)
14	My teacher is only interested in my homework.	102 (84.3)	17 (14)	2 (1.7)
15	My teacher always asks me questions I don't know.	104 (86)	16 (13.2)	1 (0.8)
16	I don't feel like a member of this class.	104 (86)	15 (12.4)	2 (1.7)
17	I like to play games in the garden with my friends during breaks.	6 (5)	15 (12.4)	100 (82.6)
18	I like to do cluster work with my friends.	9 (7.4)	20 (16.5)	92 (76)
19	Nothing in this class is important to me.	106 (87.6)	14 (11.6)	1 (0.8)
20	My teacher asks me to help her with some tasks in the classroom.	6 (5)	21 (17.4)	94 (77.7)
21	I prefer to work alone instead of in groups in lessons.	86 (71.1)	25 (27.7)	10 (8.3)
22	When I get into trouble, my friends come to my aid immediately.	3 (2.5)	18 (14.9)	100 (82.6)
23	Everyone in our class knows each other by name.	2 (1.7)	13 (10.7)	106 (87.6)
24	It is important for me that our class is more successful than other classes.	3 (2.5)	14 (11.6)	104 (86)

Gender Differences Regarding Sense of Belonging to School

As a result of the analyses conducted in the quantitative dimension of the study, it was determined that Roma primary school students' sense of belonging to school was generally at a high level. The total mean score of the Sense of Belonging Scale was calculated as 67.72 ± 6.88. In addition, the independent sample t-test conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between the mean scores of boy and girl students showed that the belonging scores of girls were significantly higher than those of boys (t (119) = 3.78, p <). The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Students According to Gender

Gender	**n**	**Centre.**	**S**	**95% Confidence Interval**		**t**	**p**
				Lower Limit	**Upper Limit**		
Girl	52	70.12	3.95	1.80	6.58	3.466	p < .001
Boy	69	65.93	8.00				

Table 3 shows that among Roma primary school students, girls have a higher level of sense of belonging to school than boys. This finding coincides with the majority of the studies on the sense of belonging to school in the literature (Adelabu, 2007; Aşlamacı & Eker, 2016; Cheung, 2004; Cheung & Hui, 2003; Goodenow, 1992b; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Nichols, 2008; Sarı, 2012; Sarı, 2013).

Qualitative Findings

The majority of the parents interviewed in the qualitative part of the study stated that they were very satisfied with their children's schools, that they liked their children's class, friends, and teachers very much, and that they and their students did not experience any negativity because they were Roma. Some parents, on the other hand, stated that their children and themselves had experienced some negativity, but that they liked their class, their friends, and their teacher very much. It was observed that the educational level of the parents of the students in the study was quite low. In addition, it was found that the rate of absenteeism and school dropout was high, and the rate of educated parents among the parents was very low. Since parents generally work as peddlers, scrap dealers, paper collectors, in the entertainment sector, etc., it is understood that mothers are generally responsible for the education of children. In the parent interviews, it was found that the most important reason for Roma children to drop out of school is that they are directed to work at an early age and have early marriages. It is understood that girls in Roma families are burdened with the mother's duties, such as cleaning the house, cooking, and caring for young children, and are gradually prepared for marriage by their mothers, leading to school absenteeism and eventually dropping out of school. It was also observed that the literacy rate among adults and elderly Roma is very low. In order to provide for the household, boys are employed in various jobs to help their fathers. For this reason, children do not have a family elder as a positive role model.

Themes were formed by utilizing the experiences of Roma parents, face-to-face interviews with students, and field notes taken. The opinions of two experts were utilized in the development of the themes. In this part of the

research, six main themes were formed by analyzing the answers given by the parents in the interviews with the parents of Roma students, interviews with teachers, students, and administrators, field notes, and voice recordings.

These themes are as follows:
1. School satisfaction,
2. Roma poverty,
3. School absenteeism and dropouts,
4. Social stigmatization,
5. Social exclusion,
6. Social inclusion and cohesion.

School Satisfaction

P25 related to this theme: "I make a living as a scrap dealer. I myself graduated from this school. Although my father was poor at the time, my teachers and friends did not exclude me from this school. They did not discriminate. Since it is the school in our neighborhood, all of them are children of families with poor financial situations. At the same time, since there are many Roma students, we never feel like strangers in this school. The lack of discrimination is one of the reasons why we prefer this school. When I ask my child, "Are you happy with your school? Tell me if there is something that upsets you at school." He says that he loves his school very much and that he has not experienced anything negative so far. Anyway, when a child goes to school reluctantly, you know that there is a negative situation. Our child always goes to school willingly," and drew attention to the influence of school administrators on school preference.

Roma Poverty

During the implementation, the researcher approached a Roma parent and asked her if she would like to answer the questions after a small conversation. Seeing the papers in the researcher's hand, the parent was curious about the purpose of the questions. The researcher stated that she was researching Roma primary school students' sense of belonging to school and that she would ask questions related to this subject. The researcher was able to convince the parent by assuring him that his and his child's identities would be kept confidential and that their names would never be disclosed. Before the researcher started the questions, P16 stated that her student S16 was absent a lot at school. When asked about the reason, he said, "Teacher, I am a primary school dropout. I could not study, so we chose this school so that my child could study. My child loves the teacher very much, and I think the teacher loves our child. But even the child noticed that if other students did not go to school, even for a day, the teacher would immediately call their families and ask why they did not come to school. Our child also heard that the teacher called the parents of his friends. When he himself did not go to school, he would call me and ask me if the teacher had called you. I tell him yes so that he doesn't get upset. He is happy when I say so. However, if our child does not go to school, even for a week, the teacher neither calls nor asks. When this happens, our child gets very upset. P16 also stated that her situation was not good, and therefore she could not meet some of her child's needs. He also stated that he could not give pocket money to his child and that his child could not shop in the canteen, which made him very upset. In the interviews with non-Roma students, it was found that the child was also excluded and not liked by his/her friends and that they did not include him/her in their games. In the analysis of the Sense of Belonging Scale, it was found that S16 had a low sense of belonging to the school. P16: Although parents are normally not allowed to enter the school, there is a Roma parent who carries his student's bag to the classroom and is allowed to enter the school. The security guard does not let us in through the teacher's entrance. But when that parent comes, he enters the school with his child through the teacher's entrance and goes to the classroom. That parent is very rich. He helps the school a lot. For this reason, he gives privileges only to that parent. At first, the researcher did not want to believe these statements of P16. However, as a result of his observations, he realized that what the parent told him was true. Then, in order to analyze in depth, he identified the class where the parent's child was and interviewed the teacher. She first asked the teacher whether the child of a rich Roma parent was excluded from the class. The teacher stated that the child was not excluded by his classmates; on the contrary, he was the most popular student in the class, and all the students wanted to make friends with him. He even emphasized that when the class plays a game, that student chooses the players as the leaders. Since the researcher was curious about this child's sense of belonging to the school, he asked him the questions in the Sense of Belonging Scale. From the answers given by S45, it was found that his sense of belonging to the school was high. The class teacher stated that the father of this student often brought gifts and clothes to the students in the class, and that his father brought the student to school in the latest model car and carried his bag to his class. When the researcher asked the teacher whether it was forbidden for parents to enter the school, the teacher said, "Normally it is forbidden, but this family is allowed, teacher. The principal gave instructions to the security guard, and only this parent could enter from the teacher's entrance to the classroom. When the researcher asked if there were any other Roma students in the

class, the teacher replied that there were, but it was not clear whether they were present or absent. When asked about S16, she said, "Oh, my teacher, it is already clear that he will not study. What happens if he comes to school? What happens if he doesn't? His family is indifferent and ignorant, and his presence and absence are not clear. It can be said that if teachers' exclusion and stigmatization of students are continuous, students' sense of belonging to the school will be damaged, which may lead to absenteeism and school dropout.

School Absenteeism and Dropout

When P40 was told that school absenteeism and dropout are common situations among Roma students, he said, "Hodja, what you say is true. It was exactly the same in our time. Because I was a very problematic student, my father used to take me with him to sell shoes. Rather than causing problems at school and giving me a headache, I would keep an eye on my child, and if he misbehaved, I would deal with him. Like me, my child is also very naughty. The vice principal often calls me to school. Your son swore, fought, and was very naughty. Take him to another school. Where should I take him? Which school would accept us? Wouldn't the principal and vice principal of the school I go to call the old school and ask why you sent this student? I am a traveling salesman and teacher. I sell clothes, shoes, and children's clothes. We have a house inherited from my father. Thank God, I support my family. I take the boy with me so that he can learn the trade. That's why I don't send him to school much. There is no punishment anyway. I want to keep an eye on him so he won't get me in trouble. Anyway, who among the Roma has studied and become very rich so that our son can study too? School, education, and civil service are very distant things for us.

With the answer given by P40, it is understood that some of the parents do not give voice to school absenteeism due to the safety of their children and their contribution to the family budget. In the scale analysis results of S40, it was found that the sense of belonging to the school was at a low level. Within the scope of this theme, it is seen that factors such as Roma families not giving the necessary importance to education, not being able to play the role of being a parent at school, economic inadequacies, seeing their sons as a means of bringing income to the home and consequently employing them in various jobs, employing their daughters in housework and marrying them at an early age, social exclusion, and stigmatization are important factors in school absenteeism and school dropout.

Social Stigmatisation

When S31 was asked whether he had any problems at school, he said, 'Teacher, we call non-Roma students 'Geben'. We get along well with the Geben. We get along very well, especially in games. There are no problems. I have only one complaint, teacher. My father supports us by selling mobile shoes. Can you find a stable job for my father? I'd be very happy then. My father is very tired. And teacher, if a student loses something in class, the Gebens and the teacher immediately start looking for the culprit among us Roma students. The teacher first searches our bags. Then he looks at us as if we had stolen it and tells us that theft is a bad thing. This 'offends' us. But when it is proven that we are innocent, no one comes and apologizes to us. Apart from that, our teachers, friends, and administrators love us very much, and we are satisfied with them all." Based on S31's opinion, it was found that some Roma students face a stigmatization problem due to their ethnic identity.

Social Exclusion

The researcher asked S12 whether he had experienced a negative incident with his non-Roma friends. S12 looked the researcher in the eye and said, "I have a teacher, but I am ashamed to tell her." When asked why, the researcher saw that the child blushed. When the researcher said, "Tell me, why are you ashamed of me? There is nothing to be ashamed of." The child gathered courage and started to tell the following incident: "Teacher, I have a classmate whom I like very much. One day, while we were playing outside, he said to me, "Let's go to my house and have lunch together." Then he said that we would go out on the street again and continue playing. I was very surprised at first, but then I immediately said okay. I was so happy that my friend invited me to his house. Their house was still in our neighborhood. But they lived in an apartment building. There was a lift in their apartment. I love riding the lift. Anyway, we got in the lift, pressed number 4, then went down again, then up and down again. I had so much fun. Then we got off the lift at their floor. The doors were open. I guess because it was summer, his mom had left the door open so that the house would be cool. Then my friend called her mom and said she was calling me home. My friend's mother shouted at my friend very harshly from inside: "Don't bring that Gypsy boy to our house; I will kill you!" I felt so bad. I put on my shoes again and ran down the stairs. My friend was also very upset and called quietly behind me, but he was not to blame. He was my best friend at school again. Our teacher even called us the inseparable, marvelous duo. I didn't even get on the lift that day when I was going downstairs. I felt as if it were a crime to even get on that lift anymore. I went down the stairs so fast. Two by two... I still see my friend at school, but it's hard for me to accept invitations again. I've

never felt so bad in my life. Teacher, we're not Gypsies; we're Roma. If she came to us, my mom would never behave like her mom. I am sure of that."

Social Inclusion and Cohesion

When the researcher asked the child how he or she was getting along with his or her school and friends, he or she said, "I love my friends and school very much. My friends love me very much, too. Teacher, recently it was the birthday of a friend of mine who is not from our neighborhood, that is, "geben." My friend told me that she had organized a birthday party at home; her mother had made a birthday cake, and she wanted to celebrate it with all our classmates. When I asked her if I was invited, she said, "Aren't you my classmate?" I was very happy when he said, "Of course you are invited." He invited all my classmates to the birthday party, including me. For the first time in my life, I was going to go to a friend's house and celebrate his birthday. I wore the suit I wore at my circumcision. I put on clean socks and shoes and went to their house with the gift I bought. My friend and his mother welcomed us very well. We celebrated our friend's birthday with my classmates, ate cake, drank tea, and had a lot of fun. I will never forget those moments with my friends for the rest of my life. I am thinking of organizing a party for my friends when my birthday approaches. I will invite all my classmates. I hope they will all come." Here, what S79 said and the word "us" she used show that she felt herself as a valuable part of her class. At the same time, the behaviors and attitudes of his friend and his family towards S79 show that he was accepted and adopted. In the analysis of S79's Sense of Belonging Scale, it was found that his sense of belonging to the school was high.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, Roma primary school students' sense of belonging to school was analyzed. The results of the Sense of Belonging Scale showed a general tendency, and Roma primary school students' sense of belonging to school was found to be at a high level. In addition, it was concluded that the school-belonging scores of girls were higher than those of boys. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that the results of the majority of the studies show that girls have a higher level of sense of belonging to school than boys. In general, the fact that girls' participation in extracurricular social activities is higher than that of boys increases their sense of belonging to school (Fullarton, 2002). In this study, it was concluded that Roma parents felt that some of the school administrators and teachers treated them well and that their children's attachment to the school increased (due to these attitudes of the teachers).

It can be said that the theme of Roma poverty, which was created as one of the other qualitative findings of the research, is one of the critical results of the research. Poverty among Roma is intertwined with being Roma (Obrovská and Sidiropulu Janků, 2021). Research has shown that the general public's view that Roma as a community do not attach the necessary importance to education is wrong and that the main problem for Roma children is poverty (Akkan et al., 2011; Önen, 2013). As in every country, there are problems in the education system in Turkey. Poor students and their parents are the ones who are affected by these problems the most and at the highest level. When the phenomenon of exclusion, marginalization, and stigmatization is added to this poverty, Roma students experience this problem of education at a high level. One of the valuable findings of this research is that wealthy Roma parents can violate the general rules of the school if they donate to the school and the students, buy gifts for the students, and that wealthy Roma students can be the favorite students. On the contrary, it can be said that the real problem is poverty, as the poor Roma parents and students are treated as if they do not exist, the Roma students are not included in the games by the other students, and they are excluded.

The study found that Roma primary school students are directed to work at an early age and forced to leave school through marriage. Girls help their mothers with housework at home, while boys work for their fathers or relatives and contribute to the family budget. Thus, it has been determined that they become detached from school and drop out of school over time by being absent from school.

The qualitative findings of the study revealed that Roma primary school students are subjected to social stigmatization. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents stigmatized Roma students as "thieves, fighters, and swearers." In cases of theft at school and in the classroom, Roma students' bags were searched first, and Roma students were stigmatized as the ones who started the fight, regardless of whether they were boys or girls. It has been determined that a Roma student who is present in a fight environment, even for the purpose of separating the fight, is immediately labeled as a criminal. It was also found that Romani children were found to speak abusive language to each other inside and outside the school and were stigmatized as abusive by other parents. Despite this stigmatization, Roma primary school students were found to have a high sense of belonging to school.

The qualitative findings of this study also revealed that Roma parents and Roma primary school students are sometimes excluded and marginalized by other students, parents, teachers, or administrators. As a result of these findings, it was concluded that parents' efforts to choose a good teacher and the excitement of their students starting school gradually disappeared in the following periods of the school. The most important factor in this

was found to be the prejudices and attitudes of teachers and administrators towards Roma students. However, despite all these negative situations, it was observed that Roma primary school students had a high level of sense of belonging to the school.

In addition to this exclusion and stigmatization, as a positive result of the research, it was found that there were also schools where social inclusion (integration) and cohesion were experienced. In one of the schools where the research was conducted, students sharing their belongings with a Roma student and the marbling artwork of a Roma student being hung in the classroom by the teacher were indicators of social inclusion and integration. In addition, the good feelings of a Roma student who was invited to a birthday party were good examples of social inclusion and integration. It was found that Roma students who experienced social inclusion (integration) by their teachers and friends positively affected their sense of belonging to the school. Teachers reported that students who experience social inclusion and integration are happy in the classroom and have high academic achievement. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that the positive approach of teachers and school administrators towards parents positively affects students' sense of belonging to school.

Recommendations

As a result of the results and experiences gained in the research, the following can be suggested:

- First of all, it would certainly be useful to design activities in all segments of society, including schools, to prevent the use of discourses that divide society, such as marginalization, exclusion, stigmatization, and prejudices. Therefore, unifying and inclusive policies for Roma citizens should be developed.

- Measures should be taken to prevent negative and unnecessary concepts such as exclusion, stigmatization, marginalization, and prejudice based on ethnic differences from turning into social inequalities. The measures taken can be implemented not only in education policies but also in all state policies in line with the definition of the social state.

- One of the factors that keep the sense of belonging to school high is good relationships at school and satisfaction with the school environment. In parallel with this, if schools focus on giving students a sense of belonging to school, significant progress can be made in solving students' emotional and behavioral problems.

- The simplest solution to increase Roma students' sense of belonging to school would be to allocate funds to schools located in areas where Roma families are concentrated.

- Educators are, of course, the ones who can control the experiences of exclusion, stigmatization, and marginalization that Roma primary school students experience. The research findings show that school administrations, teachers, other students, and their parents can consciously or unconsciously cause Roma students and their parents to experience these negative experiences. Therefore, in order to prevent this discriminatory attitude, the most important element in education—teachers and their qualifications—can be scrutinized.

- These negative experiences may occur because teachers do not receive adequate and qualified training on inclusive education. Therefore, teachers should be informed about Roma before and during their service. For this reason, teachers should treat Roma students the same way they treat other students and avoid exclusionary, marginalizing, and stigmatizing behaviors.

- One of the important issues related to Roma primary school students is the elimination of inequality of opportunity in education and the implementation of necessary activities for school inclusion. Roma families with low educational and socio-economic status are not able to participate effectively in school and are unable to provide the support at home that the school expects. Therefore, the lack of access to most legal rights and opportunities for Roma primary school students, which is parallel to the poverty of Roma children, is one of the most important problems to be solved. By addressing these problems, educational policies and programs can be developed that provide equal opportunities for all students. Necessary measures can be taken by the state to ensure that all citizens have equal access to these opportunities.

- Curriculum at the level of children and young people could include topics on anti-discrimination. The inclusion of topics related to Roma culture and Roma-oriented issues in these curricula could have a positive impact on social cohesion and integration. In addition to the curriculum, information and awareness-raising activities and memorable projects can be developed for Roma citizens. Introducing the cultural richness of Roma citizens in these projects could also be of great importance.

- It was found that most Roma primary school students do not have actual work habits and do not have a room or a suitable environment at home to study in. Despite these disadvantages, these students have a high sense of belonging to the school, which suggests that they could be offered more opportunities for education. Keeping

open social activity areas such as libraries or classrooms with computer and internet facilities where poor Roma children can spend time after class hours, study, and have access to computers and the internet can contribute to strengthening their sense of belonging to the school. It is also recommended that these practices be implemented in areas where Roma children live in large numbers.

- Being seen as worthless, excluded, and treated as if they do not exist is one of the ugliest behaviors that can be shown to people. Seminars and in-service trainings on inclusive education can be provided for school administrators and teachers in order to prevent these behaviors towards Roma citizens.

- In the light of the data obtained, it is possible to conclude that the educational perceptions of Roma families should be changed and that these families should be supported to become socioeconomically stronger. The artistic and sporting talents of Roma students should be brought to light, and Roma children should be encouraged to get together more with their non-Roma peers. Teachers who work with Roma students could also be included in training programs on how to approach Roma students.

Author (s) Contribution Rate
Both researchers contributed at every stage of the research.

Conflicts of Interest
There was no conflict of interest with any institution or person in the realization of this research.

Ethical Approval
Ethical Approval Ethical Permission (09/07/2021-2021/419) was obtained from Necmettin Erbakan University for this research.

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