Evaluation of Distance Education: The Sample of Guidance and Counseling Students

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the opinions of senior students in the Department of Guidance and Counseling were included in a narrow framework. The reason for recruiting graduate students was to examine the positive and negative aspects of distance education from the perspective of psychological counselors and to contribute suggestions for effective distance education. A qualitative research design was chosen for the study in which the participants' thoughts and perspectives on distance education were examined. The prediction that it is more possible to examine the participants' perspectives and thinking styles towards distance education with a qualitative approach was influential in the choice of this methodology. Data were gathered from 47 students and the main codes which were determined showed similarities with other studies on distance education. Although distance education maintains continuity of lessons by providing an opportunity for learners to watch them again, is an economical practice which enables the effective and efficient use of time and provides individuals with the opportunity to learn at their own pace, one of the disadvantages was found to be the inexperience of the lecturers.

Introduction

Mankind has always needed education and training throughout life from birth to death. The characteristics of the period in which people live have always affected the ways of providing the education and training needed(Arslan,2018; Duman,T. & Karagöz,S. 2016). Throughout history, individuals have benefited from informal, non-formal and formal education. The reform and humanism which had their intellectual foundations in the Renaissance, and the science and technology which developed with the industrial revolution all brought innovations and changes in the field of education (Karagöz & Rüzgar, 2020). Today, with the rapid changes in information communication technology, distance education independent of time and place is being applied as an alternative way to deliver education. Whereas learning is a process in which a particular behaviour should be embraced and accepted by students, teaching is an activity which gives us information about what that behaviour is. In distance education, it is only about the transfer of information to the students. Hızal (1983) stated that distance education is independent of and unaffected by the age of the learners and the time, place, method and aims in which traditional education practices are implemented. It is defined as an individualized self-education (self-teaching) activity carried out with the use of specially prepared written materials, mass communication programmes and occasional face-to-face teaching in an integrated system. Karaman and Eygü (2013) quoted Henri (1990) as saying that "Distance education is a form of education that sees mutual communication as a fundamental component of the educational process and has been developed based on this understanding". Distance education has a broader narrative than conventional education: "The source and the recipient in a large part of the learning/teaching processes are separated from each other (distant), the age, purpose, time, place and method of teaching. It is a planned systematic application of educational technology in which materials, tools and technologies and methods such as written and printed materials, audio tools, technologies, face-to-face training are used, communication and interaction between the source and the recipients is provided by interactive integrated technologies" (Arat & Bakan, 2011; Uşun, 2006).

Distance education can be said to have started with the correspondence between Ibn-i Sina and Biruni on Aristotle's views in the eleventh century and was carried out by mail in the western world in the eighteenth century; it is now far more developed as a consequence of the advanced information technologies available today such as tele-conferencing and internet applications (Kırık, 2014). Today, rapid developments in satellite technology, fiber optics, television, radio, computers, the internet and other information technologies affect

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the structure and form of education and drive educators to develop new educational programmes and teaching/learning models (İşman, 2011).

Looking at the rationale behind the use of distance education, it is used as a teaching method in circumstances in which in-class activities cannot be carried out due to the limitations of traditional education and teaching methods, and between those who plan and implement the educational activities and the learners, communication and interaction is provided from a specific centre through specially prepared teaching units and a variety of environments (Çağıltay, 2002).

The purpose of the research

When the relevant literature on distance education is examined, it can be seen that there have been many studies carried out across the world and applied to large groups. In this study, only the opinions of senior students in the Department of Guidance and Counseling were sought within a narrow framework and the purpose of recruiting these graduate students was to examine both the positive and negative aspects of distance education from the perspective of psychological counselors and to contribute suggestions to the field of distance education.

Method

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study in order to examine the opinions and perspectives of senior students in the Aksaray University Faculty of Education's Department of Educational Sciences and specifically the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling. The literature review conducted as part of the study showed that the majority of the previous studies conducted on this subject employed a quantitative design, but bearing in mind the scope of this study, it was thought that a qualitative design could provide deeper dimensions of meaning in the examination of the studied cases.

Data Collection

The participants were 47 volunteer students who had graduated from the Department in the 2019-2020 academic year. The data were collected after the end of the final semester by asking the graduates to respond to an open question asking about the positive and negative aspects of the distance education applications employed during the Covid 19 pandemic and the students' suggestions about distance education and whether it was helpful. They were asked to describe the useful or deficient aspects of the distance education process in detail and list suggestions for how it could be improved. Voluntary agreement to participate was inferred from the submission of a response to the data collection form.

Data Analysis

The acquired data were analysed using the content analysis technique. Qualitative data analysis begins with the collection of data, not after the data collection process is over, and data analysis is an iterative process which comprises continually going through the collected data and extracting meaning from it (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2015). During the analysis of the data, codes were created using content analysis and the findings were obtained by continuously comparing the generated codes with the data. The open coding method was employed for the creation of codes (Burnard *et al.*, 2008). The data set was first read and notes were taken on the data, then a first code list was created in line with the notes taken. The first code list was re-examined and repetitions were removed before the code list was finalized.

Reliability

The formula defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to ensure the reliability of the generated codes. The method of finalizing the open coding and the codes explained above was carried out by the principal researcher and a second researcher who had a doctorate in education and training as well as experience in qualitative research. In the code lists, codes used by the two analysts which were the same or very similar were determined to signify consensus, and different codes were determined as differences of opinion. In accordance with the specified reliability formula, the average reliability between the encoders was found to be 90%. After ensuring the reliability of the codes in this way, themes were created according to the similarities of the codes. Themes including the codes were presented to two educational science experts and their opinions were sought. The themes were then finalized by making any necessary corrections in line with the feedback from these experts. These themes are presented as the headings of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

One of the most important issues in qualitative research is acknowledging that the participants were voluntarily taking part in the research and protecting their confidentiality in the research report. The graduate

students whose responses were collected in this study were informed about the purpose and scope of the research and that their participation in the research was entirely voluntary. No personal information was requested from the participants on the form used for data collection. In addition, when quoting the participants' responses in the presentation of the data, code expressions which would not reveal the identities of the participants were used. In the selection of codes, numbers were added to abbreviations used to specify the respondents, and in this way anonymised participant codes were determined.

Results

Participants ' opinions about the benefits (benefits-positive aspects) of distance education were determined as 12 main codes , their opinions about the disadvantages (shortcomings-disadvantages) of distance education as 17, and their suggestions for distance education as 9 main codes. The main codes related to advantages, disadvantages and suggestions are listed under three main headings.

Advantages of Distance Education

The themes and sub-themes reached as a result of the analysis of the data about the benefits (benefits-positive aspects) of distance education of the students who graduated from the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling in the Educational Sciences Department of Aksaray University Education Faculty for the 2019-2020 academic year are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants ' views on the benefits (benefits-positive aspects) of distance education

Theme	Code	f	Percentage
Benefits of distance education	It ensured the continuity of the lessons by allowing them to watch again.	12	25.5%
	It was an economical application.	8	17.02%
	Saved time in time management	5	10.6%
	It was effective for individuals to learn at their own pace.	4	8.5%
	It removed geographical and regional barriers.	3	6.3%
	Education prevented leaving education	3	6.3%
	Prevented the spread of the disease during the pandemic process	3	6.3%
	Compulsory attendance due to special reasons also eliminated the problem of absenteeism.	2nd	4.2%
	It has been more beneficial for individuals who need special education.	2nd	4.2%
	I believe it is student-centered.	2nd	4.2%
	Contributed to the development of awareness of responsibility	2nd	4.2%
	Created a Lifelong Learning philosophy	1	2.1%
Total	**12 code**	**47**	**%100**

*STD=Student

As can be seen in Table 1, the opinions of the participants about the benefits (benefits-positive aspects) of distance education were determined as 12 main codes. When the main codes are evaluated, it is seen that distance education provides the following benefits.

It ensured the continuity of the lessons by allowing them to watch again.

STD 2 [The distance education method applied in this process has been very useful for continuing education without interruption. I think the process was successfully passed in terms of continuity of the lessons]. STD 1 [We can watch and listen to the same video again when something is stuck in our head in distance education, I think it works very well in this process]. STD 8 [provides flexibility in terms of accessing the course contents from the environment we want whenever we want. Providing retrospective access at any time provides significant support in terms of continuous repetition. It is useful in terms of providing the opportunity to take back the incomprehensible parts in the videos and watch them again]. STD11 [It has been beneficial in terms of having access to every individual, being accessible at desired times, not missing documents , providing the opportunity to both receive training and improve ourselves in another field, saving space and time]. STD17 [The biggest benefit of online education was to be able to listen to the lesson easily and even watch the repetition whenever we wanted within a week whenever you were available. We have accessed course documents more easily and I think it was more advantageous that the exams were also composed of homework]. STD25 [A good way to make up for the benefits of distance education, at least in difficult situations. It is a great advantage that we can watch the lesson whenever we

want and rewind when we do not understand]. STD27 [I see the ease of accessing lessons as an advantage. There is no such thing as missing a lesson. It is an advantage for us to be able to access the necessary education whenever you want]. STD28 [I had no difficulty in following the distance education process as a student. I followed the contents with pleasure. I was very interested to see video content suggestions in some of our lessons]. STD29 [Each student was able to continue to take his lessons without any problems and he could access the necessary documents related to his lessons from his place of residence. We were able to access our lessons whenever we wanted and listen to our professors. It was an important issue for me that the teacher whose lecture I listened to was my own teacher, and this was achieved]. STD29 [Distance learning my Although I liked or not, which is very clear and obvious that the injured br We continue to receive our We can education process continues although our away no matter training school and we live in order to be able to graduate in this process lesson. Although I do not find distance education useful in general, it has served as a savior in epidemic situations like this and that]. STD32 [Although distance education is not as effective as face-to-face education in this difficult period, I think it is beneficial at least for the continuation of education]. STD 33 [First of all, since distance education is independent of time and place, I was able to attend classes whenever I was convenient. I had the chance again in matters I did not understand].

Views on the Disadvantages of Distance Education

Table 2. Participants ' opinions on the disadvantages (shortcomings-negatives) of distance education

Theme	Code	f	Percentage
	Inefficient and inactive	4	8.5%
	Does not fully realize the learning	4	8.5%
	Doesn't provide enough interaction predominantly one-way communication.	4	8.5%
	Cannot socialize	4	8.5%
Remote Teaching	Has insufficient infrastructure	4	8.5%
	They have insufficient equality of opportunity and opportunity.	3	6.3%
	In teaching staff inexperience	3	6.3%
	He left hands-on lessons in the background	3	6.3%
	Replay capability also pushed students to relax	3	6.3%
	It deprives individuals of communication and socialization and isolates individuals, which causes depression.	2	4.2%
	It is an inefficient practice for students who lack self-discipline and self-control.	2	4.2%
	The comfort of the home environment made it difficult to focus on the lesson in distance education.	2	4.2%
	It cannot contribute to solving the learning difficulties encountered in the learning process instantly.	2	4.2%
	He was insufficient in affective and psychomotor domains	2	4.2%
	Has a negative effect on health	2	4.2%
	Families have insensitivity to distance education.	2	4.2%
	Success assessment is not made objective	1	2.1%
Total	**17 codes**	**47**	**%100**

As seen in Table 2, the opinions of the participants about the negativities (shortcomings- disadvantages) of distance education were determined as 17 main codes. When the main codes are evaluated, the disadvantages of distance education are shown below.

Inefficient and inactive

STD1 [Inefficient and inactive. I think the school environment is more efficient and active in terms of learning efficiency. I don't think distance education is a substitute for school]. STD 16 [I don't find distance education useful. Personally, it is a comfortable education process, but I do not think that the education is fully provided. I think it will always be more beneficial to teach the lessons by keeping the student active]. STD 19 [The teacher explains the negative aspects only from the slide. There is no interaction between the students. We could not participate during the video, so there was no participation in the lesson. In my

opinion, I was not motivated at all and I do not think the lessons were very productive. Implementation is not done anyway and there was not enough control over the presentations. In general, there is a mess that occurs in all the lessons. I could not focus fully when I opened the lessons, I could not put the integrity of the subject in my mind]. STD 32 [The fact that the lessons made through online education are not in the classroom environment like formal education decreases the permanence and quality of this education].

Does not fully realize the learning

STD18 [If the education of the student is taken as a whole, three areas , cognitive, affective and psychomotor , should be included in this evaluation. When evaluated from a cognitive perspective, I think that the flow of information to the student is not provided efficiently because in distance education, it is a situation that requires self-discipline for the student to sit at the table and work efficiently, and each student may not be able to provide this self-discipline in terms of both the developmental period he / she is in and his / her personality and learning potential. there may also be factors preventing this]. STD22 [Learning difficulties encountered during the learning process cannot be solved immediately and there are problems that may develop after this situation. Due to the large number of students, there are problems in communication] . STD 14 [In the design and operation of the system, the educators are more interested in technology or in other words, communication tools than their own area of expertise and students, due to the indifferent dominance of the technology, and they can focus on technology rather than the needs of the educated. In the event that interaction in education is insufficient or not, the teacher cannot benefit from auxiliary elements such as facial expressions, body movements, tone of voice that will directly affect the expression]. STD 39 [There may be poor sound and image quality, which causes us to watch the video. While we could participate in the lessons in face-to-face education, we could not participate in the lessons in this practice. This is also an obstacle to effective learning]

Recommendations Regarding Distance Education

Table 3.Suggestions of the participants for distance education

Theme	Code	f	Percentage
Distance learning Intended Suggestions	Infrastructure should be provided and image sound quality should be improved	14	29.78%
	The variety of teaching methods and techniques used in distance education should be increased.	7	14.9%
	In -service trainings should be organized for applied courses and the lessons taught in this process after the pandemic should be given again in an accelerated manner.	6	12.6%
	Equality of opportunity and opportunity should be ensured in financial terms.	6	12.76%
	Family control and family support should be provided.	4	8.5%
	Different events should be held on different live platforms.	3	6.3%
	Exams should be for research, development and reflection	3	6.3%
	Lecturers should be given lectures about the distance education process.	2	4.2%
	The thought of watching the lesson again disconnects the student from the study discipline. There should only be participation in classes during class time.	2	4.2%
Total	**9 code**	**47**	**%100**

As can be seen in Table 3 , the suggestions of the participants for distance education were determined as 9 main codes. When the main codes are evaluated, suggestions for distance education are listed below.

Infrastructures should be established across the country and image sound quality should be improved.

STD 1 [Correction of picture and sound quality My suggestions: the image and sound quality of the videos are not good enough, which reduces our focus]. STD2 [Universities that do not have the necessary internet infrastructure, especially our university, can be made live lessons by transforming the distance education system into synchronous distance education in these and future epidemic processes by carrying out necessary internet infrastructure improvement studies]. STD6 [Because of the unequal socio- economic levels of each student, they have difficulties in accessing full distance education. I think that this issue should be prioritized and students should be supported, at least it should be done about internet connection] STD7 [As a solution to all these problems, students from low-income families should be provided with computers,

the internet infrastructure of the regions should be inspected and free internet access should be provided]. STD11 ["Distance Education" course can be added to the curriculum of institutions that train students to become educators in the future . An infrastructure should be established to ensure fast and easy communication between the student and the instructor]. STD13 [It was an excellent opportunity for us to have a distance education infrastructure in case of such an epidemic. I think our trainers will be more experienced after this epidemic. I believe that Turkey's internet infrastructure should be developed for such sudden crises] . STD14 [Universities should strengthen their infrastructure for online courses] STD 15 [The situation of the students was not taken into account at all. Many of our friends had neither computers nor internet in the village. They had a lot of trouble in accessing classes. Students' needs and shortcomings should be taken into account when distance education is to be made. At least compensation should be provided]. STD17 [My suggestions may be to provide an online learning environment as if we were in the classroom by strengthening my infrastructure and enabling it, and to make the lecture videos more interesting than the content of the lesson]. STD22 [in distance education infrastructure, this will be used to set up the infrastructure and human resources, infrastructure and content services will be offered with doing this is very important. Therefore, the infrastructure should be sufficient. For example, internet access or technological equipment. Students who did not have internet access with the available distance education could not watch the videos. In distance education, the financial and moral opportunities of the students' family should be taken into consideration]. STD29 [Also, not having a computer or internet in every student's home poses a huge problem for distance education]. STD 38 [Absolutely not learning. The teacher says something important in the video, pat the internet is going. It gets distracted as it is very stimulating around. My suggestion could be a click better if the internet infrastructure is strengthened]. STD44 [However, since not everyone has the same opportunities (telephone, internet, computer), it was not possible to benefit from the same professor under the same conditions as in the school. For example, I live in the village and there is no internet in our house, the phone does not work very much, so it was a bit troublesome for me to benefit from distance education. I think there are many students like me . Therefore, distance education did not help me much] .. STD47 [Higher quality equipment can be used, sometimes sound and image may be poor].

Discussion and Conclusion

Distance education has been a method used on different platforms in education in the face of the adverse situations caused by the COVID 19 virus. Distance education practices continued seemingly smoothly in countries with a solid infrastructure and appropriate technology. However, the most important element in any education process is the student, and the efficiency of distance education varies according to the students' perspective on the process of distance education, their individual attitude to responsibilities to benefit from distance education, and differences in their socio-economic status and living environment. In this study, the advantages and disadvantages perceived by senior students of guidance and psychological counseling were analysed and compared. In terms of the beneficial aspects of distance education, the following advantages were found: ensuring the continuity of the lessons by providing the opportunity to watch them again, the cost-effective nature of the technique, enabling effective and efficient use of time, providing the opportunity for individuals to learn at their own pace, contributing to equality of opportunity by removing geographical and regional barriers, preventing the spread of the coronavirus during the pandemic, eliminating the obligation to attend classes for special reasons as well as the problem of absenteeism, being more beneficial for individuals who need special education, being student-centred, contributing to the development of an awareness of responsibility and creating a lifelong learning philosophy. These findings replicate those identified in previous studies (Tuncer & Taşpınar, 2008; Özdoğan & Berkant, 2020; Kaden, 2020; Andoh *et al.*, 2020; De Paepe *et al.*, 2018; De Neui & Dodge, 2006; Horspol & Lange, 2012).

In addition to the benefits of distance education, there werre also disadvantages or insufficiencies due to the lack of infrastructure and also to the inexperience of the users. Previous research into distance education and the results of the current study identified similar disadvantages of distance education and these are related to areas requiring psychological counseling, such as the inexperience of the teaching staff; leaving the applied lessons in the background and giving the students the opportunity to watch them again can make them complacent; depriving individuals from being able to socialize and communicate can push individuals into loneliness, depression and stress; it can be an inefficient practice for students who lack self-discipline and self-control; the comfort of the home environment makes it difficult to focus on the lesson in distance learning; it does not contribute to the immediate solution of learning difficulties encountered in the learning process; it is inadequate in the affective and psychomotor area; it has a negative effect on health; and the insensitivity of other family members to distance education. Also, not making an objective evaluation of success, which is important in evaluating students' achievements, is similar to findings made by Ramos-Morcillo and Leal-Costa (2020).

Suggestions which can be made for making distance education more effective and efficient are as follows. An appropriate infrastructure should be provided and the quality of images and sound should be improved; the variety of teaching methods and techniques used in distance education should be increased; in–service training should be organized for applied courses; the lessons taught using this process during the pandemic should be given again in an accelerated manner; equality of opportunity and means should be ensured in terms of the materials used; help with family control and family support should be provided; different events should be delivered on different live platforms; exams should be set for research, development and reflection; lecturers should be fully trained in the distance education process; the prospect of watching a lesson again can disconnect the student from the study discipline, so teachers should be aware of this; and there should only be participation in classes during the pre-set class hours. Distance education has a long historical background and has become one of the alternative ways of delivering education and training with the development of information technologies. It is important in terms of effective education to make improvements to the process by taking into consideration the suggestions set out above to eliminate the disadvantages of distance education, which has become increasingly important in the COVID 19 pandemic.

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