

Perspectives of Faculty of Sport Sciences Students: Distance Education during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the views of students at sports sciences faculty on distance education based on some variables. The population of the study consisted of Sports sciences faculty students. The data were collected from the participants via the Google Forms platform, and participation was on a voluntary basis. The form that was used in the study to collect the data consisted of two sections. The first section included the Demographic Information Form developed by the researcher, while the second section included the Views on Distance Education Scale developed by Yıldırım et al. (2016). The obtained data were statistically analyzed using the SPSS 25.0 package software. As a result of the study, statistically significant differences were determined in the variables of gender, department of education, wanting the classes to continue through distance education and devices used in distance education ($p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference in the variables of age and class year ($p > 0.05$). Consequently, it was determined that the attitudes of the students towards distance education were generally low. Accordingly, work may be carried out towards increasing the effectiveness of departments that require applied education.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, distance education, students.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduce the Problem: The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest difficulty experienced by humanity since World War II which defines the global health crisis of our time¹

It was firstly reported in December 2019 in China² and turned into a pandemic which took more than 160 countries in the world under its effect in a few weeks by quickly becoming a pandemic with destructive effects³. By 21 June 2020, the "World Health Organization (WHO) Status Report recorded 8.7 million COVID-19 cases and 460,000 deaths" whose numbers are increasing every day⁴. The most prevalent symptoms of the disease have been observed at fever, cough and shortness of breath. The pandemic that reached almost all countries around the world was reported in Turkey on 10 March 2020 for the first time. After this process, several problems have started to appear in the country. Since the time it reached Turkey, the pandemic has led to radical decisions that caused several significant effects and outcomes in the tourism, social, economic, political, administrative, legal, military, religious and education fields. In particular, one of the first interventions by the time the pandemic appeared in Turkey was closing of schools. In the COVID-19 pandemic process, schools were closed down in many countries as in the case of previous large epidemics^{6,7}. According to the UNESCO (2020a)⁵ data, by 7 April 2020, schools had been closed down in 188 countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation has affected approximately 92% of the student population worldwide (1,576,021,818 students). For the purpose of mitigating the negative effects of closing down schools, organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF wanted countries to take precautions especially regarding disadvantaged groups and declared that they would provide support to countries in terms of facilitating the continuity of education for everyone via distance education.

In Turkey, for the purpose of preventing the spread of the virus, the Higher Education Council (YÖK) declared that education and instruction would be suspended for three

weeks starting on 16 March 2020. With the uncertainty that emerged later, it announced that education and instruction in the spring semester would not be in person⁸. After this process, a decision was made that in person classes would be replaced by online classes starting with the date of 23 March 2020. This way, it was aimed to prevent infections and create a social distance by having especially the young population stay at home in the COVID-19 pandemic⁹.

While distance education in Turkey might not be traced back to long ago, distance education programs that are generally on the postgraduate level are carried out at many universities today, while there are distance education research and application centers within a hundred and twenty universities¹⁰.

With development of technology, several innovations have taken place in the experience of education. Online education is one of these innovations. Some examples like computers, television systems, satellites for education purposes, tele-communication, information processing systems, databanks, database systems, multimedia, simulation media, education technology centers and interactive videos are examples of new practices on the level of media in education technology¹¹⁻¹³. The fact that these are not dependent on time and space has provided opportunities in the pandemic period in terms of especially preventing infection and continuation of education and instruction.

Inability to practice in person education in Turkey due to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the inclusion of the distance education process at universities, too. In this context, it is aimed to examine variables like age, gender, department of education, class year, status of willingly participating in distance education and technological materials used in the process of distance education according to individuals' views on distance education. Additionally, this study has significance in terms of assessing the views of students at a sports sciences faculty of a university which involves several applied courses

regarding distance education and helping in the design of education and instruction programs and curricula in the process of distance education. Consequently, this study aimed to investigate the views of Sports Sciences Faculty students.

METHOD

This section of the study provides information on the sample, data collection instruments used in the study, method of data collection and statistical techniques used in data analysis.

2.1 Research Model: This study had a descriptive screening model. This model is an approach that aims to describe a past or present situation as it was or is. The individual or object that is the subject of the study is aimed to be described as they are within their own conditions. As there was no effort to change or affect them in any way¹⁴, this method was used to determine the state of distance education in the eyes of students receiving education at universities.

2.2 Sample: The sample of the study consisted of 121 female and 220 male students at Faculty of Sports Sciences in Muğla Province, Turkey. The data were collected from the participants via the Google Forms platform, and participation was voluntary. A total of 350 individuals were reached, but 9 missing or incorrectly filled forms were excluded, and the number of the forms included in the analysis was 341.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments: The form that was used to collect the data of the participants consisted of two parts. The first part included a Demographic Information Form to collect the demographic details of the participants, while the second part consisted of the “Views on Distance Education Scale” developed by Yıldırım et al.¹⁵ to collect the opinions of the participants on distance education. The scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale whose items are scored as 1 “Absolutely Disagree” and 5 “Absolutely Agree”. The scale consists of 18 items and 4 dimensions. There are 6 items in the personal suitability dimension, 5 items in the effectiveness dimension, 4 items in the instructiveness dimension and 3 items in the aptitude dimension.

2.4 Data Analysis: The SPSS 25.0 package software was used in the analysis of the collected data. Frequency, percentage and reliability coefficient calculations were made. The suitability of the dataset for normal distribution was tested. As the significance level was smaller than 0.05 according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnova test, it was concluded that the data did not show a normal distribution, and non-parametric tests were found appropriate for the analysis. Mann Whitney U test for two variables and Kruskal Wallis H test for more than two variables were utilized. The reliability of the scale was determined based on the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

RESULTS

This part of the study presents the findings on determination of the views of the participants on distance education.

Table 1. Descriptive information of the participants

Demographic Variables	f	%	Total
Age	18-20 years	90	26.4
	21-23 years	213	62.5
	24 years or older	38	11.1
Gender	Female	121	35.5
	Male	220	64.5
Class Year	1st year	20	5.9
	2nd year	71	20.8
	3rd year	82	24.0
	4th year	168	49.3
Department	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	82	24.0
	Coaching Education	162	47.5
	Sports Management	77	22.6
	Recreation	20	5.9
Wanting Distance Education	Yes	154	45.2
	No	187	54.8
Device Used	Computer-Laptop	133	38.7
	Smartphone-Tablet	208	61.3

Table 2. Statistical information on the attitudes of the participants towards distance education

	n	\bar{x}	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Distance Education	340	2.5535	1.11759	1.00	4.44

*Very Low (1.00-1.80), Low (1.81-2.60), Medium (2.61-3.40), High (3.41-4.20), Very High (4.21-5.00).

In the assessment of the effect levels of the scores of the participants’ attitudes towards distance education on a scale of 1 to 5, it was seen that their views were on a low level (\bar{x} =2.55).

Table 3. Kruskal wallis h test results between the views of the participants and the variable of age

Scale Dimensions	Age	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square d	df	p	Post Hoc
Views on Distance Education	⁽¹⁾ 18-20 years	90	162.51	4.663	2	.097	-
	⁽²⁾ 21-23 years	213	168.96				
	⁽³⁾ 24 years +	38	202.58				

As seen in Table 3, according to the data analysis, there was no significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and their ages ($p>0.05$).

Table 4. Mann whitney u test results between the views of the participants and the variable of gender

Scale Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U Value	z	p
Views on Distance Education	Female	121	152.18	18413.50	11032.500	-2.616	.009*
	Male	220	181.35	39897.50			

$p<0.05^*$

As seen in Table 4, according to the data analysis, there was a significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and their gender ($p<0.05$). Accordingly, the points of view of the male students on distance education were more positive than those of the female students.

Table 5. Kruskal wallis h test results between the views of the participants and the variable of class year

Scale Dimensions	Class	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Squared	df	p	Post Hoc
Views on Distance Education	⁽¹⁾ 1st year	20	130.98	3.637	3	.303	-
	⁽²⁾ 2nd year	71	170.76				
	⁽³⁾ 3rd year	82	172.05				
	⁽⁴⁾ 4th year	168	175.35				

$P < 0.05^*$

As seen in Table 5, according to data the analysis, there was no significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and their class year ($p>0.05$).

Table 6. Kruskal wallis h test results between the views of the participants and the variable of department

Scale Dimensions	Department	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Squared	df	p	Post Hoc
Views on Distance Education	⁽¹⁾ Physical Education and Sports Teaching	82	171.21	10.239	3	.017*	2>3
	⁽²⁾ Coaching education	162	182.18				
	⁽³⁾ Recreation	77	141.21				
	⁽⁴⁾ Sports Management	20	194.30				

$p<0.05^*$

As seen in Table 6, according to the data analysis, there was a significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and the department of their study ($p<0.05$). According to the post hoc analysis, the views of the students at the department of coaching education were more positive than those of the students at the department of recreation.

Table 7. Mann Whitney U Test Results between the Views of the Participants and the Variable of Wanting Classes to Be Provided by Distance Education

Scale Dimensions	Distance E.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U Value	z	p
Views on Distance Education	Yes	154	259.74	40000.00	733.000	-15.092	.000*
	No	187	97.92	18311.00			

$p<0.05^*$

As seen in Table 7, according to the data analysis, there was a significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and their status of wanting classes to be provided by distance education ($p<0.05$). Accordingly, those who wanted distance education had more positive views on distance education than those who did not want it.

Table 8. Mann Whitney U Test Results between the Views of the Participants and the Variable of Device Used

Scale Dimensions	Device	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U Value	z	p
Views on Distance Education	Computer-Laptop	132	193.16	25496.50	10869.500	-3.300	.001*
	Smartphone-Tablet	209	157.01	32814.50			

As seen in Table 8, according to the data analysis, there was a significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and the devices they used for distance education ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, the views of those using Smartphones-tablets on distance education were more positive than those using computers-laptops.

DISCUSSION

COVID-19, which emerged in the city of Wuhan in China, has also affected education-instruction, and education institutions started to provide their education and instruction processes through only education platforms. This study examined the views of students at Faculty of Sports Sciences on distance education.

According to the analyses conducted in the study, there was no significant difference in the views of the participants on distance education based on their ages. In parallel with our result, Kılınç and Çavuşoğlu and Acar also concluded in their studies that there was no significant difference based on the variable of “age”¹⁶⁻¹⁷. There was also no significant difference among the students at different class years in terms of their views on distance education ($p > 0.05$). This result may have been caused by that the first- and second-year students had not yet received formal education at the university due to the pandemic period, and therefore, they were not able to make a comparison to distance education. As opposed to our study, Çavuşoğlu and Acar¹⁷ determined that the variable of class year caused a significant difference in all dimensions of the Views on Distance Education Scale (VDES) except for the dimension of “instructiveness” ($p < 0.05$), and in all dimensions with significant differences, as the class year level increased, the scores on the views towards distance education increased¹⁷.

In the study, a significant relationship was found between the views of the participants on distance education and their gender ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, the views of the male students on distance education were more positive in comparison to the views of the female students. Considering that distance education may provide an advantage independently of time and space in some cases, this difference between the men and the women may have been caused by the participants’ statuses of working at a job. In support of the result of our study Çavuşoğlu and Acar¹⁷ (2020) also found that the scores of men in terms of their views on distance education were higher than those of women ($p < 0.05$). In this case, it may be stated that male students see it more advantageous to utilize the opportunity of getting information independently of time and the learning environment. According to the data obtained in the study by Birişçi (2013),¹⁸ while the attitudes of male students towards distance education were higher than those of female students, the difference was not statistically significant. These results were not in parallel with those reported by Ateş and Altun,¹⁹ Kışla,²⁰ Şimşek, İskenderoğlu and İskenderoğlu²¹ and Çandarlı and Yüksel²².

The analysis in this study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and their department of study ($p < 0.05$). According to the post hoc analysis results, the views of the students studying at the department of coaching education on distance education were more positive than those studying recreation. The reason for this result may have been the differences in the curricula between the departments. It was also determined that there was a significant relationship between the views of the participants on distance education and their statuses of wanting distance education to continue ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, those who wanted distance education to go on had more positive views on distance education than those who did not want distance education. According to the findings obtained by Aktaş et al.,²³ most students think that their life in the social sense has ended temporarily. It was also discovered that students want to follow their classes from afar due to this pandemic process, but they think examinations carried out by the distance education system do not increase their capacities, and they do not want distance education under normal conditions. In this study, there was a significant difference in the views of the participants on distance education based on the devices they used for distance education. Accordingly, the views of the students who used Smartphones-tablets on distance education were more positive than those who used computers-laptops. Based on this result, it may be stated that the participants preferring devices like phones-tablets preferred these devices due to their more portable and accessible nature, and thus, they showed a positive attitude.

Consequently, as many other fields, the field of education is among the top and most important fields that have been influenced by the pandemic process we are experiencing. While most of the decisions made by countries among their various precautions have been reflected on the field of education, the process of distance education that almost had not been in the agenda at all has become a significant solution for preventing interruptions in education by being integrated into education institutions with today’s technology. In this study that was conducted to investigate the views of students at a sports sciences faculty on distance education, it was found that the students’ views towards distance education were positive, and based on these positive views, it may be recommended to design measurement and assessment tools in this direction and include them in online education also after the pandemic process, use these digitally in other education platforms (seminars, training, conferences, etc.) and include distance education in our education lives in some form.

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