The Evaluation of the Opinions and Satisfaction of International Students about Distance Education Delivered Due to Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case of Turkey

Yabancı Öğrencilerin Covid-19 Salgını Nedeni ile Verilen Uzaktan Eğitim Hakkındaki Görüş ve Memnuniyetlerinin Değerlendirilmesi: Türkiye Örneği

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Abstract

Covid-19 has negatively affected the entire world in economic, social, and educational areas. Many countries have launched distance learning applications to ensure learning continuity. Turkey is a country that is preferred by the students from the Turkic Republics and neighboring countries. This study was undertaken to put forth the opinions, satisfactions and problems of the international students about distance education in Turkey. 435 international students have participated the research. The data was collected through online survey technique. The research results suggested that the foundation universities broadly adopt synchronous education, whereas public universities deliver asynchronous education. It was concluded that the great majority of students participating in the research had problems in following the lessons and the overall satisfaction rate (64%) was moderate and approximately half of participants (53.8%) of them found the distance education effective. The students, studying graduate, were observed to be relatively more satisfied with distance education when compared to the other students. The largest problems that students have in distance education are internet access and hardware-related technical problems; lack of internal motivation and discipline as it is a virtual environment; difficulty to understand the lessons due to non-performance of the interactive lesson. Covid-19 was also seen to affect the social life of almost all students (90.8%) negatively.

Keywords: Distance education, online learning, Covid-19 pandemic, international students

Paper Type: Research

Öz

Covid-19, tüm dünyayı ekonomik, sosyal ve eğitim gibi alanlarda olumsuz yönde etkilemiştir. Eğitimin devam edebilmesi için pek çok ülke uzaktan eğitim uygulamalarını başlatmıştır. Ancak, uzaktan eğitim sürecinden beklenen sonucu alabilmek için eğitim ortamının çok yönlü olarak tasarlanması gerekmektedir. Son yıllarda Türkiye'de eğitim gören yabancı öğrenci sayısı hızlı bir artış göstermiştir. Türkiye Türk Cumhuriyetleri ve komşu ülkelerden gelen öğrenciler için tercih edilen bir ülkedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de Covid-19 salgını sürecinde üniversitede eğitim gören yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerin uzaktan eğitim hakkındaki görüş, memnuniyet ve sorunlarını ortaya koymak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Çevrimiçi anket ile gerçekleştirilen araştırmaya Türkiye'de farklı üniversitelerde eğitim gören 435 yabancı öğrenci katılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre Vakıf üniversiteleri senkron eğitimi daha yaygın kullanırken, devlet üniversitelerinde asenkron eğitim verildiği görülmüştür. Araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğunun dersleri takip etmede sorun yaşadığı, uzaktan eğitimden genel

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memnuniyet oranının %64 olduğu ve %53.8'inin uzaktan eğitimi etkili buldukları sonucuna varılmıştır. Lisansüstü eğitim gören öğrencilerin diğer öğrencilere göre uzaktan eğitimden daha çok memnun oldukları görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin uzaktan eğitimde yaşadıkları en büyük sorunlar ise; internet erişimi ve donanımla ilgili teknik problemler; sanal bir ortam olduğundan dolayı içsel motivasyon ve disiplin eksikliği; etkileşimli ders yapılmadığından dolayı dersleri anlamanın güç olmasıdır. Covid-19'un öğrencilerin tamamına yakınının (%90.8) sosyal hayatını da olumsuz yönde etkilediği görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uzaktan eğitim, çevrimiçi eğitim, Covid-19 salgını, yabancı uyruklu öğrenci

Makale Türü: Araştırma

Introduction

Coronavirus (Covid-19), which started in China and spread rapidly to the world, has been identified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization and have led countries to exercise their emergency and crisis management procedures. The coronavirus is still rapidly spreading and if the necessary precautions are not taken, it drags the countries into a dead-end by incredible increases in death cases. According to the official statement, the total number of Covid-19 cases in Turkey as of 25th August 2021 is 6.253.711, the number of recovered patients is 5.739.755 and 54.995 people have died of the virus. Across the world, the total number of cases is 214.012.258 and 4.465.597 people have died of the virus (Case Numbers, 2021).

Rapidly-spreading Covid-19, has created an atmosphere of uncertainty worldwide. Therefore, it has forced countries to take extraordinary precautions in the fields of economy, health, social and education. The first and immediate measure taken worldwide to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic was closing the educational institutions and suspending education. Universities and schools were closed in China, the country where the virus originated, as of 26th January 2020 and other countries have followed China and closed their education institutions. On 3rd March 2020, UNESCO stated that the closure of universities and schools had affected 290.5 million students worldwide and invited countries to implement the distance education programs to prevent students and their families from being negatively affected by this situation and to ease applications. On 27th March 2020, it was stated that approximately 90% of the world's student population (more than 1.5 billion) was out of educational institutions and the regions where schools have remained open were Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, Sweden and some states of the USA (Wikipedia, 2020a).

To prevent the spread of coronavirus, a series of implementations have been launched in the country where the virus originated for the continuity of learning because the closure of schools has been posing a major risk for the education, protection and the welfare of children. With educational institutions at all levels closing in 191 countries, learning continues through distance and notably digital solutions (UNESCO, 2020).

Following the suspension of education in primary, secondary and high schools for one week and higher education for three weeks in Turkey as of 16th March 2020, it has been decided that 2019-2020 Spring semester courses to be held through distance education as from April. According to official data of the Ministry of National Education for 2020-2021, the total number of students in preschools, primary schools, secondary and high schools is 18,085.943. 1,579,691 of these students are enrolled in formal education programs of the Open University (Ministry of National Education, 2020). In higher education, 7,940,133 students are studying at 208 universities, including foundation and public universities, in the 2019-2020 academic year (Interpress, 2020). As of 2018 data published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Turkey became the 10th country in the world with the highest number of international students in higher education with 125,138 students (Yükseköğretim, 2020c).

The distance education portal in primary, secondary and high schools, enabling the transition to distance education in a short time, is Education Information Network (EIN), which was developed by the Ministry of National Education in 2012. EIN is an online education platform that enables teachers and students to access course contents prepared in accordance with the curriculum. Following the decision to pursue distance education after Covid-19, the content of EIN was enriched and lecture-based videos for lessons were created with the support of volunteer teachers. Across Turkey 123 universities have Distance Education Application and Research Centers (DEC). Universities that do not have a distance education infrastructure have been allowed to cooperate with other universities. The content is the critical element of distance education and CoHE made all courses in digital media, which have been prepared by Anadolu, Atatürk and İstanbul Universities and made available in course pools, accessible to all universities' academic members and students with the interface of CoHE -Courses in order to accommodate the needs of universities that are not prepared for also content. Courses at universities can be held synchronously or asynchronously. Some universities that do not have a distance education infrastructure also continue the process of education with applications, such as Zoom, Advanced Learning Management System (ALMS), and Skype. For the continuity of education, a "Roadmap for Distance Education Applications During Pandemic Period" was set by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) by establishing a "Commission for Digital Transformation in Higher Education". The procedures to be followed in five primary topics in education - curriculum, infrastructure, human resources, content, and implementation - were set in the road map.

Distance education that has become a current issue all over the world along with Covid-19 pandemic is a very comprehensive, planned and designed teaching-learning activity that offers many learning activities to users by developing special communication methods through electronic or non-electronic means that remove the obligation of the teacher and student to be in the same space and at the same time and gives students the responsibility of self-learning. Distance education can also be defined as the blending of traditional and online educational environments by incorporating information and communication technologies into the process of education to support and improve learning. The applications in the process of education and training that provide educational opportunities regardless of time and space by running digital tools are called distance education applications.

When the historical development process of distance education was reviewed, distance education applications, although the exact launching time is unknown, is believed to be first used through the first letters. "Hermands", one of the world's leading institutions in distance education, was found in Sweden in 1898 and language training was delivered in this institution. In 1919, the first radio station was installed in the United States to broadcast educational programmes. Educational broadcasts through television yet started for the first time at IOWA University of the United States. In 1960, "British Open University" was also established in England (Wikipedia, 2020b).

The development stage of distance education in Turkey can be examined in four stages. It is possible to define the first stage (1923-1955) as discussion and creation of conceptual framework; the second stage (1956-1975) as teaching by letter; the third stage (1976-1995) as the use of radio and television as a distance education tool and the last stage (1996- ...) as the use of information-based, internet-web technologies in education (Bozkurt, 2017).

Distance education has many advantages. First and foremost, the time and space dependence in education is beside the point but flexible. Every student has the freedom to choose the appropriate time and space (Arkorful and Abaidoo, 2015). Distance education allows conveying huge amounts of information to massive populations. Millions of students can easily access educational materials with the means of appropriate infrastructure at the same time. It is an alternative for students who could not enrol in formal education programs since they have to work. Furthermore, distance education offers overseas or national training programs for

students and individuals who can not enrol in a formal education program in their own country upon their economic opportunities (Toker Gökçe, 2008). It presents educational opportunities for disabled students, as well. It also reduces the costs of educational institutions and provides education opportunities for many students without increasing the building capacity. It creates an environment where individual differences are taken into consideration in learning process and accordingly, students can manage the process depending on their learning speed and lessons they need to focus on (Arkorful and Abaidoo, 2015). The permanence of learning is increased with applications that enable both visual and verbal coding by giving students access to many different resources in distance education. It also provides educational opportunities for the students through the experts with whom the student would not be able to communicate and interact under normal conditions.

Besides its advantages, distant education has also some disadvantages. The initial investment costs are high in educational institutions that will deliver distance education. Since education is not delivered face-to-face, students have difficulties in connecting to distance education. It is not easy to establish face-to-face education relations in distance education. There are some disruptions, particularly in synchronous courses due to technical problems. It is difficult to deliver applied courses (laboratory, workshop, music, painting, art, etc.) through distance education. At first stage, preparing the curriculum and course content of distance education takes time. It is difficult to ensure the motivation of the students who do not have the self-studying ability and are accustomed to receiving education in institutions, such as schools, faculties, etc. (Altıparmak, Kurt and Kapıdere, 2011). It may not be an effective application for students who do not have self- studying habits and have problems in accessing to technology (Aksoğan, 2019). If students who do not have self-learning habits without any help do not receive the necessary support, they don't engage to the education. Prejudices and attitudes of both students and teachers for distance education may negatively affect distance education. If students and educators who are familiar with face-to-face teaching do not have a certain level of competence in the use of technology, they may have difficulties (Telli Yamamoto and Altun, 2020). If the communication skills of the students are intended to be developed, distance education may negatively affect this development. If no events that will continuously keep the students in communication are held in distance education, students will be precluded from being socialized. Similarly, instructors and academics, who do not have the ability to extend knowledge to students, although the level of their professional knowledge is very high, may lose their students in the distance education process. It is difficult to control unethical actions like cheating, plagiarizing in applications, such as exams, homework and projects that are done through distance education during the evaluation process. There may be access preventions, blockages and connection problems on websites and applications that students use intensively in certain time zones (Arkorful and Abaidoo, 2015).

The distance education should be well-designed to turn its disadvantages into an advantage. It has been seen that education was suspended in situations such as natural disasters, war, epidemic throughout the history; however, Covid-19 has been evaluated as a pandemic worldwide, turned into a global crisis in almost every country of the world within the same period of time and caught many countries unawares. Also, in terms of education, the epidemic has caused problems in the quality and effectiveness of the education in educational institutions due to lack of infrastructure and readiness for distance education.

After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1992, with the declaration of Independence of the Turkic Republics, Turkey has collaborated with the Turkic States and relative communities in many fields. Although relationships are in many different fields, collaboration is mostly observed in the field of education (Çöllü and Öztürk, 2009). Turkey is a country that is preferred by the students from the Turkic Republics and neighbouring countries. The reasons can be considered as the cultural and geographical

proximity, quality in education and being a country of worth living (Kıroğlu, Kesten and Elma, 2010).

The biggest problem that the international students at universities in Turkey have is the failure to speak the language of Turkish. Both speaking and writing skills of students is expected to be improved before or just after their arrival to Turkey in order for students to adapt to both social and educational environments (Musaoğlu, 2016; Çöllü and Öztürk, 2009). However, it is not possible for students to socialize and improve their languages via distance education and in isolation during Covid-19 process.

It has great importance that whether students, studying in a foreign country other than their own country, are more affected by these processes and that the conditions of these students are considered by CoHE and universities in the planning of distance education processes. It is aimed to increase the number of international students, a significant source of economic income in the UK, USA and many developed countries, also in Turkey. In fact, the education sector is also among the sectors that are provided with service export incentives by the Ministry of Trade. Therefore, determining the satisfactions and identifying the problems of the international student which studying at the undergraduate level at the university in Turkey, put forth the importance of this study.

1. Method

This study intends to put forth the satisfaction, oponions and problems of international students for distance education that was put into practice during the Covid-19 process in Turkey.

In order to carry out the research, the necessary Ethics Committee Approval was obtained by the Ethics Committee of Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, dated 30th September 2020 and numbered 20754.

The descriptive research method was used in the research. The descriptive research is a survey study which is carried out to evaluate the sampling that represents the population within the extent of the research question, to put forth the current situation by defining its nature and features without changing the existing conditions in the research process (İslamoğlu and Alnıaçık, 2014).

1.1. Participants

The number of international students who enrolled in higher education to study in Turkey is 172,000. At the confidence interval is 0.95, the minimum number of sampling that will represent 172,000 students should be 384 (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2004:50). The number of students participating in the research is 435. Therefore, it can be said that sampling is sufficient to represent the population.

1.2. Data Collection and Analysis

To obtain research data, the "Distance Education Assessment and Satisfaction Survey", which was developed by researchers to determine the satisfaction and identify the opinions of international students for distance education applications of universities during the Covid-19 process, was used. The survey consists of 32 questions. The first 12 questions of the survey are aimed to determine the demographic characteristics of the students. Questions 13, 14,15,16,17, 20 and 32 are those that were prepared to determine the conditions of receiving distance education previously, following the lessons, being satisfied with distance education, and distance education effectiveness and can be answered as "Yes-No". Questions 18 and 19 were prepared as multiple choice to determine how distance education is handled and students spend their leisure time. Questions 21,23, 24, 26, 27 are those that can be answered as "Yes, No, Partially" to evaluate how the lessons are being taught, the materials and instructors. Questions 22, 25 and 28 are open-ended questions that are prepared to learn the problems of the students

thoroughly that they had in distance education. Question 29 is a question that they can score between 1 and 10 to put forth the satisfaction of the student with the lessons delivered over the internet. Questions 30 and 31 are prepared to determine the effects of Covid-19 on students.

For the analysis of data, statistical package programs were employed. Descriptive statistics were used such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage in the data analysis. Chi-Square test was performed to determine the relationships between the data obtained as a result of the survey and demographic characteristics and opinions of students about distance education applications. Analyzes were carried out with a confidence interval of 95% and an acceptable margin of error of 5%.

2. Findings

Findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants are given in Table.1

Table 1.Demographic characteristics of the participants (n=435)

	Items	n	%
Gender	Female	196	45.1
	Male	239	54.9
Age	20 and under	110	25.3
	21-25	224	51.5
	26-30	61	14.0
	31 and over	40	9.2
Country	European Countries	17	3.9
	Turkic Republics	34	7.8
	African Countries	85	19.5
	Asian Countries	299	68.7
City of Residence in Turkey	Metropolis	348	80.0
	Other cities	87	20.0
During stay in Turkey	1 and 5 years	332	76.3
	6 and 10 years	103	23.7
Type of University	State University	335	77.0
	Foundation University	100	23.0
State of Education	Associate Degree	43	9.9
	Underguate	281	64.6
	Master's Degree	86	19,8
	Doctorate	25	5,7
Educational Field	Health Sciences	121	27.8
	Social Sciences	119	27.4
	Engineering	144	33.1
	Sciences	23	5.3
	Other	28	6.4
Year of Study	1st	200	46.0
	2nd	95	21.8
	3rd	55	12.6
	4th	60	13.8
	5th	25	5.7
Places of Residence in Turkey	Public dorm	93	21.4
	Private dorm	61	14.0
	Relative	75	17.2
	Alone at home	92	21.1
	Home with friends	114	26.2
How It Covers the School Fee	Family	273	62.8
	State Scholarship	136	31.3
	Special Scholarship	26	6.0
Which Device Connects to the Internet	Computer	133	30.6
	Phone	302	69.4

When the data related to demographic characteristics are reviewed, 54.9% of the participants are male, 51.5% of them are between the ages of 21-25, 68.7% of them are from Asian countries, 80% of them are residing in metropolitan cities in Turkey, 77% of them are studying at State Universities and 64.6% of them are receiving undergraduate education, 33.1% of them has been studying in engineering and 46% of them has been in their first year. 26.2% of students stated that they stayed with their friends, whereas 62.8% of them stated that the tuition was afforded by his family. The vast majority of students (69.4%) is observed to connect to the internet via their mobile phones.

Table 2. Students' opinions on distance education

Items	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Have you ever taken a distance learning course previously?	137	31.5	298	68.5
Are you facing any problem in following your courses?	229	52.6	206	47.4
Have you thought of taking a break from school?	137	31.5	298	68.5
Are you able to access to course records when you miss a course?	307	70.6	128	29.4
Are you satisfied with distance learning?	201	46.2	234	53.8
Do you think that distance education lessons are effective?	234	53.8	201	46.2
During this period, do you get social support from your university?	198	45.5	237	54.5

When Table 2 is reviewed, it is observed that 68.5% of the participants have not received distance education courses and 52.6% of them have had problems following the lessons. It is observed that the vast majority of students were dissatisfied with distance education (53.8%) but thought that distance education courses were effective (53.8%). Distance education is a type of education that many students are not familiar with and the vast majority of students have not taken any social support from universities in this process (54.5%).

Table 3. Students' opinions on distance education (n=435)

Items	Yes		No		Partially	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Do you think the uploaded course materials uploaded by lecturers in distance learning are system sufficient for you?	163	37.5	60	13.8	212	48.7
Do you actively participate in courses? Example: Do you ask questions and get the answer?	211	48.5	81	18.6	143	32.9
Do you regularly follow your courses?	246	56.6	52	12.0	137	31.5
Do you easily communicate with your lecturers?	240	55.2	60	13.8	135	31.0
Do you have trouble accessing resources related to your lessons and assignments?	116	26.7	211	48.5	108	24.8

When the students' answers to the questions, which were asked related to distance education are reviewed, it is seen that 48.7% of students have found the course materials (pdf, word, ppt, course links etc.) that were uploaded to the education system by the instructors "partially" sufficient and that the majority have had no problems on active participation in courses (48.5%), regular follow-up (56.6%) and easy communication with the instructor (55.2%) and access to resources (48.5%).

38 of the students were not able to follow the courses regularly (n = 52) due to a number of reasons. When the reasons for failure to follow courses given by these students are ranked, "dislike of distance education, failure to adapt" takes the first place (23.7%), the second place (15.8%) is "difficult in internet access", the third place (13.2%) is "default in holding courses on days and hours that are appropriate for the curriculum" and the fourth place (10.5%) is "preference of self-studying".

Table 4. Satisfaction level of students with the distance education

Satisfaction Level	n	%
Low	47	10.8
Moderate	279	64.1
High	109	25.1

Students were asked to score their level of satisfaction for distance education between 1 and 10. The average satisfaction level of students was found to be 6.08 and their satisfaction levels were grouped as "low" (1-3), "moderate" (4-7) and "high" (8-10). When Table 4 is reviewed, the satisfaction level of students can be told to be at a moderate level with 64.1%.

Table 5. The biggest problem that students have in distance education

	n	%
I had no problems	66	15.2
Lack of internal motivation and discipline as it is a virtual environment	46	10.6
Materials are not effective	30	6.9
Difficulty to understand the lessons due to non-performance of the interactive lesson	41	9.4
Problems in the preparation and implementation of the curriculum	16	3.7
Not speaking and understanding Turkish very well	28	6.4
Problems arising from the infrastructure of the distance education portal	14	3.2
Technical problems related to internet and hardware	93	21.4
Not having the necessary equipment and equipment for distance education	14	3.2
Insufficiency of the instructor in distance education	19	4.4
Individual characteristics and attitude towards distance education	13	3.0
Finding face-to-face education higher quality and effective	6	1.4
Distance education is not suitable for applied courses	17	3.9
Exams and assignments are more difficult than face-to-face education	21	4.8
Inability to communicate with the university administration when having problems	9	2.1
The psychological situation caused by staying away from family, friends and social environment due to Covid-19	2	0.5
Total	435	100.0

Students were asked to determine the biggest problem that they had in distance education and when the answers were ranked by their percentages (Table 5), "technical problems related to internet and hardware" takes the first place with 21.4%, the second place is "lack of internal motivation and discipline as it is a virtual environment" with 10.6% and the third place is "difficulty to understand the lessons due to non-performance of the interactive lesson" with 9.4%. Whereas 15.2% of the students stated that they had no problems in distance education.

Table 6. Effect of Covid-19 on social life

	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Did Covid-19 affect your social life?	395	90.8	40	9.2

Covid-19 pandemic process has affected the social life of 90.8% of students. When the longing of the international students who came to Turkey especially for education by leaving their families and circle of friends, being in a foreign country, speaking a language other than their native language and difficulties in self-expression came together with the coronavirus process, the students stated that they were negatively affected by this situation.

Table 7. The relationship between the university type where education is received and the teaching method of distance education courses

| | | University Type | | | | Total | X^2 | sd | p |
| | | State | | Foundation | | | | | |
		n	%	n	%				
Teaching Environment	Synchronous	137	66.8	68	33.2	205			
	Asynchronous	155	87.6	22	12.4	177	23.661	2	.000
	Synchronous and Asynchronous	43	81.1	10	18.9	53			

According to the Table 7, it seems that the courses are mostly taught synchronously (live) in distance education. However, when evaluated by university type, it is seen that the courses are taught rather asynchronously (voice, video recording, and uploading lecture notes) in public universities. Whereas synchronous (live) education is rather delivered in foundation universities.

Table 8. The relationship between state of education and satisfaction with distance education

| | | Are you satisfied with distance learning? | | | | Total | X^2 | sd | p |
| | | Yes | | No | | | | | |
		n	%	n	%				
State of Education	Associate Degree	12	27.9	31	72.1	43			
	Underguate	120	42.7	161	57.3	281	21.034	3	.000
	Master's Degree	50	58.1	36	41.9	86			
	Doctorate	19	76.0	6	24.0	25			

In Table 8, it appears that undergraduate (57.3%) and associate (72.3%) students were dissatisfied with distance education whereas graduate (58.1%) and doctorate (76%) students appeared to be satisfied.

Table 9. The relationship between state of education and the thought that courses are effective

| | | Do you think that distance education lessons are effective? | | | | Total | X^2 | sd | P |
| | | Yes | | No | | | | | |
		n	%	n	%				
State of Education	Associate Degree	22	51.2	21	48.8	43			
	Underguate	137	48.8	144	51.2	281	13.469	3	.004
	Master's Degree	55	64.0	31	36.0	86			
	Doctorate	20	80.0	5	20.0	25			

As can be seen in Table 9, more than half of undergraduate students (51.2%) did not find distance education courses effective whereas the majority of graduate and doctorate students (80%) found distance education courses effective. Since the graduate and doctorate students gained the habit of studying, preparing homework with a more independent, individual and constructivist approach in respect of other students, it can be argued that they had fewer problems in managing distance education courses.

Table 10. The relationship between the students' countries and their satisfaction with distance education

		Are you satisfied with distance learning?							
		Yes		No		Total	X^2	sd	p
		n	%	n	%				
Country	European Countries	8	47.1	9	52.9	17			
	Turkic Republics	15	44.1	19	55.9	34	1.841	3	.606
	African Countries	34	40.0	51	60.0	85			
	Asian Countries	144	48.2	155	51.8	299			

As a result of the analysis no significant relation was found in the relationship between students' countries and their satisfaction with distance education (p>0,05). When countries are evaluated on their own merits, percentages of students' satisfaction from African countries and Turkic Republics appears to be lower than the other countries.

Table 11. The relationship between the duration of students' stay in Turkey and their satisfaction with distance education

		Are you satisfied with distance learning?							
		Yes		No		Toplam	X^2	sd	p
		n	%	n	%				
Duration of Students' Stay in Turkey	1-5 years	151	45.5	181	54.5	332			
	6-10 years	50	48.5	53	51.5	103	.296	1	.586

No statistically significant relation was found between the duration of students' stay in Turkey and their satisfaction with distance education (p>0.05). However, when the table is evaluated, the majority of students appear to be dissatisfied with distance education. The satisfaction rate of international students who have stayed in Turkey for more than 6 years is observed to be partly a little higher compared to those who stay shorter.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

Findings of the study carried out by Savaşan, Yardımcıoğlu and Beşel (2015) supports the research findings. It was observed that primary academic problem of the students was the difficulty of understanding the lessons. The same study mentioned that common theme in student judgments on academic issues was language problem and referred to the importance of the language problem. International students appear to have difficulty in understanding the lessons in distance education, as well.

Derman (2010) addressed the problems of international students in learning in the Turkish language in his study and mentioned that the most common problems after the Turkish preparatory class were that they did not sufficiently understand the academic resources of the undergraduate programs that they study, they failed to express themselves enough with Turkish language both verbally and in writing in the classroom or exams. Teaching courses asynchronously in the distance education process and overloading of information with excessive material has been challenging the students who are not Turkish native speakers.

Uploading only course materials to the system in distance education or sending course chapters to students by overlooking the particular needs of the students have adverse effects on overall education. Printed materials should be generated to support distance education and the level of the student 's learning and understanding should be taken into account. Printed materials uploaded to the system make learning more concrete by providing different examples and exercises to the student (Eşgi, 2006). The purpose of distance education is to transfer the materials to the students before the course for their preparation, not the content. Nonetheless, the active participation of students in the course should be targeted with the examples,

applications, questions and answers that will support these materials during the course (Erkut, 2020).

Distance education applications offer people multiple and mixed options for learning. Although there are many options, students studying in distance education environments should take on more responsibility of learning than the students, studying in settled classrooms. Also, students in distance education environments have to work more than they do in settled classrooms (Kaya, 2002). Since distance education does not provide a physical classroom environment, it causes a lack of motivation and discipline in students. It creates a negative situation for students who do not have the ability to study independently.

While students have the chance to ask questions at any time, to get answers to their questions, to get immediate feedback on their mistakes in practice and application exercises, to study collectively with their friends and to cooperate with their peers in classical education, these activities are much more limited in e-learning.

The interaction of the student with instructor, content and environment in learning is extremely important. The student has the opportunity to ask questions, to find answers to their questions, to get immediate feedback on the results in the applications and work in groups in face-to-face teaching. Nevertheless, such practise opportunities are more limited in distance education (Tosun and Özgür, 2009). Especially for the students who have just started university. Communicating with the instructor increases self-confidence of the students and this is not only being reflected on education satisfaction but also have been affecting one's success. Distance education will ensure the student gain knowledge with the applications that allow interaction and communication and to increase self-confidence.

It was identified that one of the most important reasons that prevents the courses from being followed was a discontinuous internet connection and the most important factor, affecting course success, was the teaching method of the instructor, and problems encountered at the exam time also have a huge impact on student satisfaction (Özyürek, Begde, Yavuz, Özkan, 2016). Students believe that they get more homework in distance education than in formal education and it is harder to get prepared for the exams in distance education. Such factors have significant effects on students' perspective on distance education.

In distance education, there might be some problems in accessing to materials. Uploaded course materials may not be displayed by the students due to system errors. Problems may come up in uploading course materials to the system due to slow internet speed, upload of materials to the system according to a certain format, slow processing of systems due to coding errors (Çığlık and Bayrak, 2015).

The problems that are encountered in distance education programs in higher education institutions were identified not only as material access Bilgiç and Tüzün (2015) but also internet access, speed-related problems, insufficient capacity of the database, problems in video conferences, freezing screens, power cuts in online exams.

Students also need tools, such as phone, tablet or computer that they can use to participate in distance education. Computers and other equipment at homes are now being highly demanded by the parents who have to work from home and the children in the Covid-19 pandemic. The students who do not have access to laptops and internet facilities at home are also another problem to consider for distance education applications (Pradeep, 2020). The tuition and expenses of international students are afforded by the fund that their families transfer. Affording the fee of the tools and internet required for distance education with this fund, which barely affords the tuition and physiological requirements, may not be possible for students (Kıroğlu, Kesten and Elma, 2020).

Distance education is a critical issue that is required to be considered in terms of the quality of education in relation to teaching laboratory, music, art, medicine and technique courses that require active practice (Pradeep, 2020).

All countries where the Covid-19 epidemic was observed are experiencing a hard time especially with regard to education, economy, and health. This is also considerably challenging for students who have to continue their education life in a distance education environment, even though they adapt easily to technology. Many opinions consider distance education as an alternative to formal education. Good management of distance education is possible by considering characteristics of students and designing a system that will accommodate their needs.

The differences in the capacity of different school types to support distance learning, the differences between independent and online learning flexibility of students, students' motivation and skills may affect distance education positively or negatively. It is hard to predict how long the pandemic will continue. Therefore, if planned and effective steps are not taken in education, the COVID-19 pandemic will likely lead to serious educational disruption for one generation globally (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020).

For the maintenance of uninterrupted and effective distance education:

- Digital skills of students and instructors should be improved and distance education courses should be delivered synchronously but supported by asynchronous applications.
- All students should be included in the system. Organizations that can be a sponsor to the students who do not have technological devices, internet access and financial means should be searched and state-industry cooperation should be provided.
- Social support should be provided to make physically distant students be physiologically, psychologically and socially well.
- Academic calendar and lesson programs should also be prepared in distance education and education should be continued by adhering to the designated dates, this should be announced to students and the students should be informed in any changes.
- An easy and practical introductive education video on the use of distance education systems should be prepared in a way the students can understand and uploaded to the webpages of the universities and uncertainty towards innovation should be minimized by sending this introductive education video to the e-mails of students/instructors.
- E-mail and telephone communications should be activated by ensuring the instructors to keep in continuous contact with students.
- More understandable sentences should be used for foreign students who speak and understand Turkish more slowly in distance education.
- Students should be encouraged to participate in the course by creating an active learning environment in distance education.
- For exams to be held by means of distance education, controlling mechanisms of the students should be ensured to be improved rather than the difficulty level of the exam.
- The duration of distance education courses should be meticulously adjusted, the course should be neither too short nor too long and these periods should be supervised by the university administration.

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