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COVID-19 AND DISTANCE  
LEARNING

COVID-19 VE UZAKTAN EĞİTİM



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COVID-19 AND DISTANCE LEARNING

COVID-19 VE UZAKTAN EĞİTİM

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**Abstract:** While microbes have evolved in human history in such a clever and clever way to survive, whenever people start to fight, after these wars, four horsemen of the apocalypse appear. The four horsemen of the apocalypse: war, famine, plague and death always roam together. Andrew Nikiforuk explains this situation as "No matter how hard modern man tries, he can neither defeat the upper organisms, nor fool the fourth horseman" (Nikiforuk: 2018). Time will tell whether the future people will behave well to the world and each other, but Covid-19 may have shown the world how much human needs technology and human interaction. <sup>1</sup> Epidemics also bring about social transformation. Since January of 2020, Covid-19 areas under the influence of Turkey has emerged as changes in teaching and learning process with the pandemic. This change brought about a technological change. The process of change and expansion that started in a certain part of the society has revealed the working and educational life that the masses continue at home. Training processes started to be continued distance learning. Foundations and state universities across Turkey, have been online for a short time to adapt to the educational process. The online education process from home, which started as of March 2020, has started to continue.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dijitalleşme, dijital iletişim, uzaktan eğitim, Covid-19, eğitim teknolojisi

**Öz:** Mikroplar insanlık tarihinde hayatta kalmak için böylesine zekice bir şekilde evrimleşirken, insanlar ne zaman savaşmaya başlasalar, bu savaşlardan sonra kıyametin dört atlısı ortaya çıkar. Kıyametin dört atlısı: savaş, kıtlık, veba ve ölüm her zaman birlikte dolaşüyor. Andrew Nikiforuk bu durumu "Modern insan ne kadar uğraşırsa uğraşsın, ne üst organizmaları yenebilir ne de dördüncü atlıyı kandıramaz" (Nikiforuk: 2018) şeklinde açıklar. Gelecekteki insanların dünyaya ve birbirlerine iyi davranıp davranmayacağını zaman gösterecek, ancak Covid-19 dünyaya insanoğlunun teknolojiye ve insan etkileşimine ne kadar ihtiyaç duyduğunu göstermiş olabilir. Salgınlar aynı zamanda sosyal dönüşümü de beraberinde getirir. 2020 Ocak ayından bu yana, Türkiye etkisi altındaki Covid-19 alanları, salgınla birlikte öğretim ve öğrenme sürecinde değişiklikler olarak ortaya çıktı. Bu

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değişiklik teknolojik bir değişikliği de beraberinde getirdi. Toplumun belirli bir kesiminde başlayan değişim ve genişleme süreci, kitlelerin evde devam ettiği çalışma ve eğitim hayatını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Eğitim süreçleri uzaktan eğitimle devam ettirilmeye başlandı. Türkiye genelinde vakıflar ve devlet üniversiteleri, eğitim sürecine uyum sağlamak için kısa bir süredir çevrim içi oldu. Mart 2020 itibariyle başlayan evden online eğitim süreci devam etmeye başladı.

**Keywords:** Digitalisation, digital communication, distance learning, Covid-19, ed-tech, educational technology

### Introduction

In this context, the Covid-19 process, which continues as a pandemic period, has experienced a great change and transformation in the use of educational technologies. This change and transformation has brought about distance education and especially a life that high school and university students lead at home. It is seen that this process brings about the loneliness caused by social isolation and not being able to socialize.

Social penetration theory, abbreviated as SPT, in sociology literature, SPT explains the evolution of interpersonal relationships. "Onion theory" SPT relies on the ability of the growth of relationships to explain individuals' attitudes, personal characteristics, opinions and feelings to each other, pointing to the layers and types of knowledge explained between the parties. SPT focuses on three classes of factors that accelerate or limit the growth of relationships: the personal characteristics of the participants, the consequences of change, and the situational context. Personal characteristics include people's beliefs, biographical features, interests, and social needs. These are superficial, such as age and gender, responses including intimacy, beliefs, and sensuality, each of which contributes to the growth of the relationship (Mangus, Bock, Dora, Jones, Folse and Anne, 2020: 376).

When considered in the context of social penetration theory, it is seen that not being able to socialize and not communicate is one of the biggest problems of online education. People need to communicate face to face while conveying their feelings and thoughts, and in this context, this communication is a social need.

### Covid-19 Hi-Tech Tsunami and Turkey

The 2000s in the world brought along a period in which technological change increased and masses turned to internet technologies. This period is seen as a technological comfort period. However, while the use of internet and digital technologies was optional until the pandemic period started, it became a necessity with the start of the pandemic. 2020 furnace technology-dependent increase in the overall mass of the ongoing outbreak starting in Turkey and focused on technology has led to a return to life. In this context, the speed of adaptation to the internet and digital technologies has increased.

Especially as the first primary schools across Turkey with March 2020, the middle and high schools have switched to online education. Turkey immediately in the same week by the

Ministry of Education implemented EBA <sup>2</sup>Remote Education Platform has been the beginning of the transition to home education students and parents struggle. Education continuing from home causes the main problem in two aspects. Firstly, since not all students receiving home education are at the same financial income level, the main problem is that not every family has the necessary technical equipment, especially when there is more than one child at home. Secondly, the part of how the children will continue their education process and who will take care of the children when parents are working appears as a second situation.

Higher education is continued by Turkey in the decision by HEC and give. With the directive sent by YÖK to the Public and Foundation Universities in March 2020, universities first switched to the online education process for an indefinite period after 3 weeks. A single platform is not used as a distance education platform in higher education. State universities and Foundation universities use many different programs among similar programs. Considering these programs in general, a presentation and lecture process in which the student is not active, the teacher lectures over the power point presentation in front of the camera emerges. When we look at the guidelines published by Yök regarding the Covid-19 process, it is seen that it constantly implements new regulations according to new developments <sup>3</sup>

With the information given by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, many countries around the world informed their citizens to stay at home, avoid very close physical contact and pay attention to social or physical distance. Education institutions and these institutions were ordered to make regulations. As a result, online classes were basically the first point to emerge. Therefore, distance education has become the only option for students. Teachers 'communication with each other and students' communication processes with each other and with their teachers were integrated into an online process. Similar to previous outbreaks, the COVID-19 outbreak also affected the personality and mental health of the student. A recent survey found that 8.1% of the general population was under moderate to severe stress during the COVID-19 crisis (Zheng, Khan and Hussain, 2020: 1).

For the last decade, web technologies have been widely used in professional exams and entrance exams such as online education system (OES) khanacademy, zybang, zhukao. Systems that allow students to design exams according to their levels have become a part of the high school and university exam system, especially with the Covid-19 outbreak (Fang, Zhao and Jia, 2019: 311). The online compulsory education created by Covid-19 actually brought along a great experience environment in itself. It has initiated a training process that will lead to taking steps towards the improvement and development of online education that emerged as a necessity. Integrating into distance education processes has brought about a really stressful process. The main problem in online education is the emergence of inadequate interaction between teacher and student. Students experience social experience of loneliness, isolation, anxiety, especially in online education (Zuo, Gao, Wang and Luo, 2020: 224). This whole process reveals a perception that online education can be reevaluated and improved, together with the convenience and lack of interaction it creates.

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<sup>2</sup> URL-1

<sup>3</sup> URL-2

### Beyond Time and Space Education in Turkey

It can also be stated that online education has a structure that pushes the boundaries and brings education to a completely different environment, since it enables an education environment independent of time and space. In this context, a world independent of space and time has been established, as especially stated by David Harvey in his work on the state of Post Modernity (Harvey: 2014). As a result of this borderlessness of education being independent from the building and an environment, equality of opportunity arises in education. It also creates an opportunity to provide a solution to students' inability to reach school, especially in rural areas. Improving the infrastructure system will create an opportunity in this sense. From this point of view, it is seen to what extent technology affects human life.

According to McLuhan, after technological developments, it is not possible for humanity to return to its ancient times, the time of old states. The concept of "Media is the Message" also emerged from this view (Çelik Varol and Varol, 2019: 139). Now, the way to transmit the message is in technology and technological equipment. The technological infrastructure of the distance education process and the fact that it is much more accessible to the masses who can easily access technological devices have also been seen in this process. Although this process has been seen to be carried out more successfully by certain countries and universities, it has also revealed a process in which students spend time at home and do not participate in education by some countries and universities. In fact, this new term imposes much more responsibility on the student. Taking attendance in distance education and exam perception in online education are completely different from classical education.

When looking at the change and transformation in education, it is possible for students who receive online education with Covid-19 to experience future socialization problems. It can be predicted that this period, in which children and young people have to be at home and have no chance to socialize with their peers, will bring forth negative reflections in the future. One of the most important points that should be mentioned with the online education process is that it is more accessible for some students, but it can create a disadvantage for others. <sup>4</sup>

#### Advantages

- An educational environment independent of location in transportation has prevented the loss of time spent on the road.
- Thanks to online education, students are not deprived of the right to continue their education.
- Online education has revealed that education in general can continue regardless of time and place.
- While many people lost their lives due to the Covid-19 virus, it became a great convenience for teachers and students to continue their education process.
- If there was no pandemic process like Covid-19, an educational reform that would

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<sup>4</sup> URL-3

take place over 10 years has been implemented.

- The use of paper has decreased and there has been a significant decrease in the consumption of printed documents.
- Students have become obliged to learn computer technologies and basic computer hardware regardless of the department they study.
- Steps have been taken towards developing new online education technologies.
- Google meet, Zoom, Perculus and many more online meeting and training platforms have emerged.
- Communication processes have turned from face to face to an online process.
- Each student had the chance to study with their family or in their own city.

### **Disadvantages**

- When considered within the scope of digital inequality, inequality arises in education and training due to the fact that technology and technological equipment do not reach every home and every student in the same way.
- While the participation and active status of the students in the course is compulsory in face-to-face education, the applications such as google meet, perculus, zoom used in the online education process create a controversial situation in respect of how the students actively participate in the course because they do not turn on sound and video.
- It was born as a result of the increase in the culture of fear. It has emerged that people start to think that their life safety will disappear when they leave their homes.
- It negatively affected the psychological and identity aspects of the students (Zheng, Khan and Hussein, 2020: 1-3).

### **Research**

Within the scope of the research of this study, university students between the ages of 18-20, who have been away from school for nearly a year, were asked about the problems they experience in socializing and computer addiction.

A total of 100 participants were interviewed. The age range was chosen from the 18-20 age group, which is the group affected by the curfew. The findings were then analyzed with content analysis. The difficulties experienced by the young people and their observations were evaluated.

The concepts of socialization problem, computer addiction, social media addiction are based on. Findings were expressed graphically according to the factors specified.

Participants were expressed as participant number 1 and participant number 2, names and private information of the persons were not used.

The questions asked to the participants were collected in three factors. Factors in the social and emotional loneliness scale (SELSA-S) for adults were used. These factors are factors for

measuring social loneliness. Social loneliness, emotional loneliness consists of factors such as family (Akgül, 2020: 60). The answers given within the scope of the research were collected under these factors.

With the online education process that emerged in the Covid-19 period, findings were collected from the participants about whether they observed an increase in social isolation in their children.

The questions were asked to be answered with an explanation as to answer the following questions with the social feelings they create by considering the Covid-19 period and distance education processes. Besides the questions, it is stated which factor they were asked about.

The participants were asked to give explanatory answers to the questions posed.

1. I feel like part of the group of friends. (Social loneliness)
  2. My friends understand my thoughts and reasons for my behavior. (Social loneliness)
  3. I don't have any friends with whom I shared my views, but I wish they were. (Social loneliness)
  4. I can trust my friends to get help. (Social loneliness)
  5. I don't have any friends who understand me, but I wish they were. (Social loneliness)
  6. I feel lonely when I am with my family. (Emotional Loneliness Family)
  7. There is no one in my family I can trust to support and encourage me, but I wish they were. (Emotional Loneliness Family)
  8. I feel close to my family. (Emotional Loneliness Family)
  9. I feel like part of my family. (Emotional Loneliness Family)
  10. My family really cares about me. (Emotional Loneliness Family)
- (Akgül, 2020: 58-59).

The online education attitude scale was also added to the study and the participants were asked to answer these questions.

Considering the expressions in the factors;

Factor 3: Demand for Distance Education,

Factor 4: Teaching Effectiveness of Distance Education,

It was decided to be named as Factor 5: Problems Encountered in Distance Education.

Within the scope of the research, only the questions included in factor 3,4,5 were asked to the participants in order to link social loneliness.

### **Factor 3: Request for Distance Education**

Item 35: Distance education should be continued for the computer lesson.



Item 33: Distance education should continue for English lessons.

Item 36: Distance education should be continued for the Turkish Language course.

Item 34: Distance education should continue for the history lesson.

#### Factor 4: Teaching Effectiveness of Distance Education

Item 2: I can learn the lessons alone without being in the classroom.

Item 1: I believe that I have learned enough lessons in distance education.

Item 3: I can follow the distance education lessons live.

#### Factor 5: Problems Encountered in Distance Education

Item 15: I find it difficult to listen as the distance education lessons are conducted quickly.

Item 14: There are problems in accessing the distance education system.

Item 17: Distance education restricts the learning of applied courses (computer etc.).

(Arslan, Bircan and Eleroğlu, 2019: 12-13).

In the first scale, a 7-degree Likert scale was used in the social and emotional loneliness scale in the scale questions and the participants were asked to give a score up to the degree of strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7).

1. I feel like part of the group of friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. My friends understand my thoughts and reasons for my behavior.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. I don't have any friends with whom I shared my views, but I wish they were.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. I can trust my friends to get help.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. I don't have any friends who understand me, but I wish they were.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )



6. I feel lonely when I am with my family.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. There is no one in my family I can trust to support and encourage me, but I wish they were.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. I feel close to my family.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. I feel like part of my family.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10. My family really cares about me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Table 1 (Akgül, 2020)

In the online education attitude scale, the participants were asked to respond with a rating of 1 (never agree), 2 (rarely agree), 3 (sometimes agree), 4 (usually agree), 5 (always agree) under the likert scale.

1. Distance education should be continued for the computer lesson.	1 ( )	2 ( )	3 ( )	4 ( )	5 ( )
2. Distance education should continue for English lessons.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. Distance education should continue for the Turkish Language course.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. Distance education should continue for the history lesson.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. I can learn the lessons alone without being in the classroom environment.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. I believe that I have learned enough lessons in distance education.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

7. I can follow distance education lessons live.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. I find it difficult to listen as the distance education lessons are conducted quickly.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. There are problems in accessing the distance education system.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10. Distance education restricts practical lessons (Computer etc.) to learning.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Table 2 (Arslan, Bircan and Eleroğlu, 2019).

Within the scope of the research, 52 university students were interviewed. When the answers given by the students who continue their education with distance education within the scope of the research are examined

When the age distribution of the students participating in the study is examined, it is seen that 34 females - 18 males participated.

30 people at the age of 20, 11 people at the age of 19, 6 people at the age of 18 participated.

1. Answers to the question "I feel like part of a group of friends"

31 people answered that I strongly agree.

2. Answers to the question "My friends understand the reasons for my behavior and my thoughts"

21 people answered that I strongly agree.

3. Answers to the question "I don't have any friends with whom I share my views, but I wish they were"

32 people replied strongly disagree.

4. Answers to the question "I can trust my friends to get help"

24 people answered that I strongly agree.

5. I don't have any friends who understand me, but the answers to the question I wish they were

34 people answered that I strongly agree.

6. Answers to the question that I feel alone when I am with my family

30 people replied strongly disagree.

7.No one in my family I can trust to support and encourage me, but the answers to the question I wish there was

33 people replied strongly disagree.

8. Answers to the question I feel close to my family

29 people answered that I strongly agree.

9. Answers to the question I feel like part of my family

35 people answered that I absolutely agree.

10. Answers to the question My family really cares about me

32 people answered that I strongly agree.

Answers given to the question of continuing distance education for computer lesson

15 people replied that they never agree.

10 people always agree with the answer.

12. Answers to the question of continuing distance education for English lessons

21 people always agree with the answer.

13. Answers to the question that distance education should continue for Turkish language course

23 people always agree with the answer.

14. Answers to the question of continuing distance education for history lesson

23 people always agree with the answer.

Answers to the question 15. I can learn the lessons alone without being in the classroom

14 people always agree.

13 people answered that they never agree.

16. Answers to the question I believe that I have learned enough lessons in distance education

16 people replied that they were hesitant.

12 people always agree with the answer.

10 people replied that they never agree.

17. Answers to the question that I can follow distance education lessons live

21 people always agree with the answer.

18. Answers to the question I find it difficult to listen as distance education lessons are

taught quickly

13 people answered "I agree".

12 gave the answer I am undecided.

19. Answers to the question: There are problems in accessing the distance education system

15 people always agree with the answer.

13 people answered "I agree".

11 people gave the undecided answer.

20. Answers given to the question "Distance education restricts the learning of practical lessons (Computer etc.)

27 people always agree with the answer.

### Result

As a result of the research, it is seen that 52 participants participating in the study stated that they experienced access difficulties due to the lack of technological infrastructure and Internet problem in the distance education system.

They state that they are generally satisfied with the distance education system and the distance education is provided and this process does not affect the learning process of the lessons negatively.

It is observed that this situation of young people who are in the process of distance education does not affect their family and friend relations negatively.

When all these points are taken into consideration, it is seen that the distance education process is a satisfactory education process especially for the young people studying in the 1st and 2nd grade of the university. It is observed that the absence of students in the school and classroom environment does not negatively affect their dialogue and communication with their friends.

In the future, distance education will perhaps form the basis of an unschooled society. It is inevitable that social transformation and change emerge from extraordinary situations. With the Covid-19 process, distance education has become a part of the lives of students and academics. The section that has adapted to this process has started to continue their socialization rituals in this way. It is observed that the students continue to socialize with their friends, with whom they receive distance education. In this sense, it is seen that the 18-20 year old student group is easily integrated into the distance education process.

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