



Açık Öğretim Lisesi Öğrenci ve Mezunlarının Yükseköğrenime Hazırlık Amaçları ve Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme Eğilimleri Arasındaki İlişki

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Öz

Bu çalışmada Açık Öğretim Lisesi öğrenci ve mezunlarının, üniversiteye hazırlık nedenleri ve yaşam boyu öğrenme eğilimleri arasındaki ilişkinin ortaya konması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma tarama modelinde betimsel bir çalışma niteliğindedir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu Türkiye genelinde halk eğitim merkezlerine kayıtlı olan açık 17 öğretim lisesi öğrencisi ve 18 açık öğretim lisesi mezunları oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan görüşme formu ve Yelkin Diker Coşkun (2009) tarafından geliştirilen “Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme Eğilimleri Ölçeği”nden elde edilmiştir. Çalışmanın temel bulguları arasında katılımcıların hem eğitim hem de çalışma imkanına devam edebilmek olduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Bu durum yaşam boyu öğrenme ile birlikte artan kariyer beklentisi ve iş hayatına hazırlık yapma durumuna bağlantılandırılabilir.

The Relationship between the Reasons for Higher Education Preparation and Lifelong Learning Tendencies of Open Education High School Students and Graduates

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the relationship between the university preparation reasons and lifelong learning tendencies of the students and graduates of Open Education High School. The study group of the research consists of 17 open education high school students and 18 open education high school graduates registered in public education centers throughout Turkey. Data of the research were obtained through the two instruments as “Lifelong Tendency Scale” developed by Yelkin Diker Coşkun (2009) and the interview form prepared by the researcher. The results of the study revealed that the predominant reason for attending at the Open Education High School is to pursue both education and work, which can have attributed to demanding aspect of future career and preparatory criterion for the work life.

Introduction

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Today, concepts such as open education, distance education programs, online education and internet-based education have become indispensable elements of education and training. The rapid change in science and technology in the current century has led to positive developments in the education system and the resources of access to education. These developments provide significant advantages for learners, especially, in relation to keep up with the equal chance of education for each citizen.

Open and distance education systems are widely used in many levels from primary education to higher education in the world as well as in Turkey. Open and distance learning can be defined as the learning process that takes place at the same or different times through digital communication systems. In this type of learning, where the teacher and the learners are far from each other, without the time and place restrictions, and where the interaction of the teacher and the learner with the learning resources are provided through distance communication systems (Aydın, 2011; cited in Pilancı, 2020). UNESCO (2016) clarifies distance education as a form of blended education. Students and teachers are separated in time and space, online education (more than 80% of the content is presented online), and printed materials are distributed by mail or other means. Distance education is a system in which teaching activities are carried out in a more planned manner, without the obligation of learning and teaching in the same environment, thanks to information and communication technologies. On the other hand, open education is defined as applications that offer non-formal education opportunities to large audiences at lower costs (printed materials, television channels, social media, etc.) (Can, 2019).

The concept of high schools as a part of open education dates back three decades ago. The Open Education High School in Turkey was established on June 2, 1992, the article 12633 of the Ministry of National Education, within the Film Radio and Television Education Presidency (FRTEB) as a form of distance education approach. Thus, it is aimed that students who cannot continue their secondary education can complete their interrupted or uncompleted education, getting the chance of a diploma and taking advantage of an equal chance in education. Based on the recent records, more than 44,000 students enrolled in the Open Education High School, which started its education life on October 5, 1992, with a passing course and credit system. Due to the increasing number of students and workload, FRTEB was supported by the National Education Development Project conducted by the Ministry of National Education and the World Bank. Thus, significant developments have been achieved in the number and quality of materials used in the open education system (Bozkurt, 2017). In 1998, the services of the Directorate of Film, Radio, and Television Education (FRTEB) and the General Directorate of Computer Education and Services were gathered under the name of "General Directorate of Educational Technologies" with the Law No. 4359. Since the year 2011, the Open Education High School Directorate has been functioning its education activities within the "General Directorate of Lifelong Learning" (MEB, 2016). Bayram (2015) presents a comprehensive stage of Open Education in High Schools along with the following stated years:

- 1992 – 1993: Only secondary school graduates were accepted.
- 1993 – 1994: the registration of students who dropped out of high school intermediate classes began to be taken.
- 1995 – 1996: Vocational Open Education programs and Western European foreign programs became operational.
- 1996 – 1997: Application software development studies started.
- 1999 – 2000: education opportunities were also provided to Saudi Arabia and Libya citizens.
- As of 2005, web-based software has been started to be used.

The open education high school system is a system based on distance education. Contrary to formal education, course passing and credit system is applied instead to passing grades. Open education high school students have the same rights as legal education students. In open education high schools, the student does not have to fail the class or be expelled from the school. Students can continue their education life if they renew their registration. Graduation requirements are that students complete eight semesters, pass compulsory courses, and have sufficient credits (MEB, 2020). Open education programs, which are part of lifelong learning, undertake a critical mission by including a large group of people who cannot access

education, whose educational opportunities are limited or unfinished, into the education system. Thus, it makes excellent contributions to realizing the objectives of "increasing the quality and access opportunities for lifelong learning programs" prepared within the framework of the 2023 Education Vision.

According to the official statistics of the Strategy Development Directorate affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, according to the numerical data of the year 2020-2021, there are 1,254,420 students in open education high schools, 105,969 students in vocational open education high schools, and 91,942 students in open education religious vocational high schools. According to the data of 2019 – 2020, there are 1,097,394 students enrolled in open education high schools, 156,613 students in vocational open education high schools, and 107,160 students in open education religious vocational high schools (MEB, 2021). In the light of these data, the number of active students enrolled in open education increased by 91,164 people in one year.

Lifelong learning represents the whole of what a person has learned and will learn throughout his life. Education and learning are the concepts that cannot be limited just to schools only. In today's conditions, where knowledge changes and develops rapidly, learning is not an activity that is limited to childhood and youth, only for the purpose of contributing to the professional development of individuals. Learning is a great process that covers human life. In this line of understanding, lifelong learning is an approach that looks at learning as an activity that continues "from the cradle to the grave" (Gündoğan, 2003; cited in Çakır & Özçiftçi, 2015). The fact that the knowledge and skills acquired through formal education are not sufficient throughout life and the need for new knowledge and skills due to the inevitable change phenomenon has made lifelong learning a necessity. The basic premise of lifelong learning is that it is not possible for students at all educational levels to be equipped with all the knowledge and skills they need throughout their lives with what they have acquired in the school system (Eleş, 2021).

According to the Ministry of National Education General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, the basic principles of lifelong learning are as follows:

- Scientific and integrity
- Validity
- Volunteering
- Openness to all
- Education anywhere
- Respond to the need
- Cooperation and coordination
- Plannedness
- Continuity
- Openness to innovation and development (TC Presidency Legislation Information System, 2021).

Lifelong learners continuously pursue their self-development and positive improvement. Knapper and Copley (2000) and Coşkun (2009) define lifelong learners as they are the ones who can plan and measure their own learning, show an active structure other than passive learning, can learn both in school and out of school, can benefit from peers, teachers and other people. Additionally, they are the ones who can obtain information from different subjects and disciplines when necessary, and can develop different learning strategies in different situations.

In 2006, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted the recommendation on "Key Competences for Lifelong Learning". In 2008, after the updates of some competencies of lifelong learning by the Council of Europe, it was characterized as follows: literacy competence, multilingual competence, mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering, digital competence, social and civic competence, learning to learn competence, citizenship competence,

entrepreneurial competence, cultural awareness and expression competence. (Kaygın, Ulus, Çukurbaşı, 2020). Within the scope of these basic competencies, in this study, we aim to determine open high school students' lifelong learning tendencies to guide their possible career plans in the future. In this vein, examining the relationship between the reasons for their preparation for higher education and their lifelong learning tendencies forms the core of the study. In accordance with this purpose, the following questions will be answered.

1. What are the ongoing and graduate students' reasons to get enrolled in open education high school?
2. What are the preparation goals of open education high school students and graduates for higher education?
3. What are the lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education?

Method

Research Model

This is a descriptive study conducted to examine the relationship between higher education preparation goals and lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates. In this context, the relational survey model, one of the general survey models, was used in the research. Relational screening models are a model that aims to detect the existence and/or the level of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2019).

Study Group

The participants of the study are composed of 25 ongoing students registered in Open Education High School affiliated to public education centers throughout Turkey and 18 participants who have previously graduated from Open Education High School. Out of the total of 50 students, the consent and the voluntary participation from 25 ongoing and 18 graduate students could be received. Eight students did not answer the survey questions completely; their responses were excluded from the data in order to present concrete results of the study. Information about the study group of the research is given in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Study Group

	Frequency (f)	Percentage(%)
Age		
17 years and under	3	8,6
18-24	4	11,4
25-34	10	28,6
35-44	10	28,6
45-54	7	20,0
55-64	1	2,9
Total	35	100,0
Gender		
male	13	37,1
female	22	62,9
Marital Status		
single	11	31,4

married	24	68,6
Education Status in Open Education		
High School		
student	18	51,4
graduate	17	48,6

The majority (20 people) of the participants in the research are people between the ages of 25-34 and 35-44. In addition, it is understood that the number of students and graduates enrolled in open education high schools is very close to each other and the majority of the people participating in the research are women. According to the findings obtained from the occupational data of the participants, it was determined that they were private sector (9), unemployed (9), housewife (9), student (5), civil servant (2) and retired (1). Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Samsun, Çorum, Hatay, Siirt, Eskişehir, Bursa, Kayseri, etc. People from many cities participated.

Table 2.
Occupation

	f	%
student	5	14,3
Public sector	2	5,7
Private sector	9	25,7
unemployed	9	25,7
housewife	9	25,7
retired	1	2,9
Total	35	100,0

Table 3.
Hometown

	f	%
Aksaray	1	2,9
Ankara	2	5,7
Antalya	2	5,7
Aydın	1	2,9
Balıkesir	1	2,9
Bursa	2	5,7
Çorum	1	2,9
Eskişehir	2	5,7
Gaziantep	3	8,6
Hatay	1	2,9
İstanbul	8	22,9
İzmir	3	8,6
Kastamonu	1	2,9

Kayseri	1	2,9
Kütahya	1	2,9
Muğla	1	2,9
Samsun	1	2,9
Siirt	1	2,9
Sivas	1	2,9
Şanlıurfa	1	2,9
Total	35	100,0

Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

The data in the study were collected through the "Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale" developed by Coşkun (2009) and the "Personal Interview Form" prepared by the researcher after taking expert opinion. In the personal interview form, demographic information was requested from the participants first. Then they were expected to answer ten questions prepared for the study about open education high school on a voluntary basis. Scale questions were designed in Google form and shared with people who were thought to be included in the study group via social media. In the survey study, no information was asked from the participants to reveal their identities. It was clearly emphasized that their participation in the study was voluntary.

The "Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale" developed by Coşkun in 2009 was prepared in a 6-point Likert type and consisted of 27 items. Responses to the scale items were graded as 1. "Very fit", 2. "Partly fits", 3. "Fits very little", 4. "Does not fit very little", 5. "Does not fit partially", 6. "Does not fit at all". In the studies conducted by Coşkun (2009), the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as .89 and the reliability coefficient as .97. These results proved that the validity and reliability of the scale were high.

Analysis of Data

In the research, the data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SSPS) package program and the answers to the related research questions were searched. Before analyzing some of the data obtained in the research, it was examined whether they showed a normal distribution. For this purpose, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted before the analyzing the question of the research "Is there a significant relationship between the lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education?" In line with the results, appropriate parametric or non-parametric test application was started. Other questions of the research were analyzed with descriptive analysis method.

Results

In this section, the findings related to the sub-problems of the study are presented in articles.

1. Findings Regarding the Reasons of Open Education High School Students Preferring Open Education:

Table 4.

Reasons for Preferring Open Education High School

Reasons for Preferring Open Education High School				
	Frequency(f)	Percentage(%)	Current Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Goal-directed	5	14,3	14,3	14,3

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No compulsory attendance	2	5,7	5,7	20,0
No compulsory attendance	1	2,9	2,9	22,9
No compulsory attendance	1	2,9	2,9	25,7
Getting a diploma	1	2,9	2,9	28,6
Economic reasons	1	2,9	2,9	31,4
Economic reasons	9	25,7	25,7	57,1
Improve myself	1	2,9	2,9	60,0
On the purpose of improving myself	1	2,9	2,9	62,9
Personal reasons	1	2,9	2,9	65,7
Personal development	3	8,6	8,6	74,3
For my personal development	1	2,9	2,9	77,1
Personal reasons	2	5,7	5,7	82,9
Want to acquire a profession	1	2,9	2,9	85,7
Vocational development	3	8,6	8,6	94,3
Digress from formal education	1	2,9	2,9	97,1
thought that formal education is a waste of time	1	2,9	2,9	100,0
Total	35	100,0	100,0	

When the first research question, the reasons why Open Education High School students prefer open education, was investigated, the participants indicated "economic reasons" as the most preferred reason, as indicated in Table 4. Other items with higher values are stated as "purpose-oriented" (such as getting a diploma, attending personal and vocational courses, getting a document, being a civil servant) and "professional development".

"I want to be a civil servant" as a reason for preference for the purpose. Another participant K13 stated that "I am not allowed to study because I am a girl and to be able to stand on my own legs". The participant K11 replied, "I think formal education is a waste of time, I am preparing for the university exam".

2. Findings Regarding the Higher Education Preparation Purposes of Open Education High School Students and Graduates:

Table 5.
Higher Education Preparation Purposes of Open Education High School Students and Graduates
Purposes of preparation for higher education

	Frequency(f)	Percentage(%)	Current Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
to be able to learn something and share it with my son	1	2,9	2,9	2,9
diploma	3	8,6	8,6	11,4
To get a diploma	1	2,9	2,9	14,3
diploma and job opportunities	1	2,9	2,9	17,1
to do a PhD	1	2,9	2,9	20,0
unable to set a goal due to lack of education	1	2,9	2,9	22,9
Become a bachelor	1	2,9	2,9	25,7
I have no idea	1	2,9	2,9	28,6
Job	3	8,6	8,6	37,1
Have a bachelor's degree	2	5,7	5,7	42,9
Become a bachelor and have a profession	1	2,9	2,9	45,7
study at vocational school	1	2,9	2,9	48,6
become a cop by finishing the police academy	1	2,9	2,9	51,4
get a healthy job	1	2,9	2,9	54,3
university	2	5,7	5,7	60,0
University degree	1	2,9	2,9	62,9
Bachelor's degree	1	2,9	2,9	65,7
Become a bachelor	7	20,0	20,0	85,7
Become a bachelor and work in public sector	1	2,9	2,9	88,6
study at university	1	2,9	2,9	91,4
to pass the university entrance exam	1	2,9	2,9	94,3

Reasons for Higher Education Preparation and Lifelong Learning Tendencies of Open Education High School Students and Graduates

University and job	1	2,9	2,9	97,1
Become a college graduate	1	2,9	2,9	100,0
Total	35	100,0	100,0	

As for the second research question, "Open Education High School students' and graduates' purposes of preparation for higher education:

The answer to the question is "getting a university diploma" - "getting a diploma" - "university", all of which are evaluated within the same scope as the item "to be a university graduate" and have the highest rate. Apart from this purpose, it was understood that the highest rate among the preferred options was the "work-profession" response.

The answer given by the participant K18 for the purpose of preparation for higher education was "I want to study in university, it shows my children that learning knows no age limit". Another participant made a comment as "I am thinking of doing a doctorate". In this part of the study, the majority of the participants stated that they aimed to prepare for higher education in order to have a university degree, to find a better job, or to set a good example for their children and their environment.

3. Findings on Lifelong Learning Tendency Levels of Open Education High School Students and Graduates:

Table 6.
Lifelong Learning Tendency Mean Normality Test

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
YBÖE_ORT	,188	35	,003	,895	35	,003

*p<.05

As seen in Table 6, as a result of the analyzes made, it was understood that the scale of lifelong learning tendencies did not show a normal distribution (p<.05). Mann Whitney U Test, one of the non-parametric tests, was used since there are two independent categories and their distribution is not normal, in order to determine whether there is a significant difference in lifelong learning tendencies according to the open education high school student and graduation status.

Table 7.
Mann Whitney U Test

	Test Statistics ^a	
	YBÖ_ORT	
Mann-Whitney U		131,500
Wilcoxon W		302,500
Z		-,710
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,478

*p>.05

As can be seen in the table above, the value of p>.05 shows us that there is no significant difference between the variables. No significant difference was found in terms of lifelong learning tendencies among those who are still students or graduated from open education high schools.

4. Findings on the relationship between lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education:

The findings regarding the relationship between lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education are shown in table 8.

Table 8.

Independent groups t-test results according to the relationship between lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
YBÖ_ORT	Equal variances assumed	3,825	,059	1,277	33	,211	,62495	,48954	-,37104	1,62093
	Equal variances not assumed			2,047	17,016	,056	,62495	,30532	-,01917	1,26906

*p>.05

As seen in Table 8, independent sample t-test was used to understand whether there is a significant difference between the lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education. The result of the analysis was calculated as $t(33)=1.277$, $p=0.211$. According to this result, there is no significant relationship between the lifetime tendencies of those who attend or graduate from open education high school and their decision to continue higher education. 29 of the students or graduates of open education high school stated that they want to continue higher education, and 6 people do not want to continue higher education.

Discussion and Conclusion

In parallel with the developments and innovations in our education system, a great increase is observed in the number of educated people. Open Education High Schools, which are affiliated to Public Education, are at the forefront of the institutions that contribute to this increase by offering the opportunity to complete their education again to those who have been away from education life for various reasons. According to the official statistics of the Ministry of National Education Strategy Development Directorate for the 2020-2021 academic year, the total number of students enrolled in the open education system, including Open Education High School, Vocational Open Education High School and Open Education Religious Vocational High School, is 1.452.331. It is thought that this number has increased significantly due to the advantages such as online exams due to the covid-19 pandemic and the reduction of the graduation period applied in the open education system from 8 to 5 terms.

The concept of lifelong learning has been the biggest indicator that learning, in parallel with open education, is not only limited to schools, but continues in every field and moment of life. In general, lifelong learning provides the opportunity for individuals to learn the knowledge and skills they need at all ages, to renew their knowledge, to comprehend meaningful and important events that affect their lives, to broaden their horizons, and to develop their personal, professional and intellectual levels consciously. (Coşkun, Demirel 2012).

According to the findings of this study, economic reasons (25.7%) are the main reason why open education high school students and graduates prefer open education high school. Then, purposeful reasons such as getting a diploma, attending personal and vocational courses, getting a document, and being a civil servant (14.3%) were shown. The students' purpose of preparation for higher education seems to be simply getting a diploma. Apart from this purpose, it was understood that the highest rate among the preferred options was the "work-profession" response. This finding is parallel with Temple (2009) study as the socio-

economical status was one of the predominant reasons of not attending at the school. Given the case, one can get the plausible insight of attending on both school and working would be based on the similar reasons.

No significant difference was found between the lifelong learning tendencies of the participants who are still students and graduated from open education high schools. Again, no significant difference was found in the findings of the relationship between the lifelong learning tendencies of open education high school students and graduates and their decision to continue higher education. While 29 of the people participating in the survey wanted to continue higher education, only 6 of the participants stated that they did not want to continue in any higher education institution. From this point of view, it is understood that most of the open education high school students and graduates decide to continue higher education.

In the light of the results obtained from the interview form, the majority of the participants (68.6%) who are interested in pursuing their higher education stated that they have been getting prepared for the university entrance exam by themselves at home. This can be attributed to the fact that the participants would like to go on their higher education, but they do not receive any educational support related to this subject, they only try to get prepared at home through their own means. This finding is inline with Kaygın, Ulus, Çukurbaşı, (2020) study. They state that the learners learn to learn while lifelong learners keep learning to learn during their education.

In relation to the participants' views on lifelong learning, one of the participant named as K4 stated that there should be no certain age to study, people should always be able to get education", while the participant K28 highlighted that "everyone continues to learn from birth to death. It's great that this education is supported in an institution. Education and training become more accessible", K11 participant replied, "A person can always educate himself, it is enough just to want", and K32 participant replied "your perspective on life changes as you learn". What kind of contributions do you think the phenomenon of lifelong learning will have in realizing your future goals? The answers given by some of the participants to the question are as follows: K4 participant, "I already like to learn. In any case, the open high school enables us to learn throughout life, there is no age limit, it contributes learners in many ways". The participant with the code K32 "sharing the information I learned with others and getting better as I share", the participant K34 "self-confidence, improving myself, being a knowledgeable parent and being able to stand on my legs" they replied.

When the answers given by the participants about lifelong learning were examined, they stated that they found lifelong learning very useful, but they wanted more vocational courses, free guidance services, seminars and career planning services to be expanded within the framework of lifelong learning. For this reason, it is understood that they need to increase personal or vocational courses especially through public education centers, organize free university preparation courses for open education high school students or graduates, and need the guidance of experts in education and training. In brief, the most predominant elements of the study that correlated with past research were the guidance preparation and future aspirations of the work- education balance.

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APPENDIX 1. Interview Form Questions

	Personal Interview Form
1.	What are your reasons for choosing open education high school? (digress from formal education, personal development, economic reasons, discrimination, professional development...)
2.	What are the advantages of studying at an open high school?
3.	What are the disadvantages of studying at an open education high school?
4.	What are the contributions of graduating from open education high school for you?
5.	What are your reasons for attending university preparation courses? (personal, familial, friends' circle, etc.)
6.	Do you find the university preparation courses useful and sufficient?
7.	What are your wishes and expectations within the framework of lifelong learning for open education high school students and graduates? (vocational courses, guidance services, seminars on career planning, etc...)
8.	What is the education level you are aiming for and what are your thoughts on the contribution of reaching this level?

9.	What are your views on lifelong learning?
10.	What kind of contributions do you think the phenomenon of lifelong learning will have in realizing your future goals?