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Full Length Research Paper

Attitudes of the academics in sports sciences towards distance education

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes of academics who teach in the field of sports sciences towards distance education. This is a descriptive research. The universe of the research consists of the sports academics who participated in the distance education in the Covid-19 period in the 2019-2020 academic year. In the study, 351 academics were reached within the scope of convenience sampling method. The questionnaire forms were prepared, distributed and collected online, taking into account the Covid-19 process. In the study, personal information form and attitude scale towards distance education developed by Ağır (2007) were used to collect data. The SPSS 21 package program was used to analyze the data in the study. When the descriptive statistics regarding the attitude towards distance education are examined, the mean of the advantages of the education subscale is determined as 37.15 ± 11.04, the mean of the limitations of education subscale is determined as 18.61 ± 7.08 and the mean of the overall scale is determined as 55.76 ± 13.79.

Keywords: Sports sciences, distance education, academic, Covid-19.

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INTRODUCTION

The virus, which is alleged to occur in Wuhan, China in the first months of 2020, has become a significant danger for the whole world. There has been a great risk for countries and their economies, especially due to the high rate of spread of the virus (Gür, 2020). It has revealed the necessity of different applications in these dangers. Among the first measures taken by the local or central administrations, there were quarantine, travel bans and martial law to protect social distance. Local and central administrations have chosen two methods in dealing with the virus. The first method is to prevent the spread of the virus by reducing the mobility. The other method is determined as creating a social immunity without any intervention to the virus. However, since the characteristics of the virus prevent the social immunity policy, maintaining social distance and minimizing mobility has been the generally accepted method (Keskin and Özer, 2020; Telli and Altun, 2020; Karcıoğlu, 2020). In general, epidemic diseases are harmful in all respects and cause changes in the society as a whole. In addition to problems such as economic problems, sudden unscheduled decisions, social life coming to a halt or social customs and traditions being stopped for a certain period, there are also negative changes in education.

In countries where the Covid-19 virus is seen, it was necessary to carry out some applications in order to prevent the spread of the virus by using the physical distance method. Within the framework of education, distance education has been determined as well. The distance education system is among the methods that administrators and experts have been using most (Keskin and Özer, 2020; Telli and Altun, 2020).

In many countries, schools, universities and different educational institutions at different levels were temporarily closed in order to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. In Turkey, as the first cases of the virus have started to be seen on 11/03/2020, universities and different educational institutions have decided to be shut down as of 25/03/2020 (Council of Higher Education, 2020).

There are some opinions that distance education, which is planned to continue for a certain period of time and be supportive of face-to-face education, will now be the basis of the education process. The courses taken in digital learning stages, which have shown serious progress and change due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will lead to improvements in this area worldwide. In addition, digital education is expected to turn into the main learning process by increasing its functions with the detection of various advanced systems (Telli and Altun, 2020; Lau et al., 2020). However, for the proper continuation of this stage, there is no definite information regarding the sources from which students access the information, which forms the resources have transformed into, and what kinds of situations the students who continue their higher education with distance education encounter. It is important to examine the distance education stages within the sports sciences as well in this period of confusion (Gewin 2020). This research is important in terms of examining the subject of distance education in sports sciences.

Distance education is defined as the transfer of education to students through web bases via internet technologies and computers that are developing every day. Distance education can be maintained independent of place and time (Çoban, 2012). The Internet-based distance education in Turkey is carried out by a method developed on Distance Education Application and Research Centers (Uzaktan Öğretim Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezleri, UZEM) of Atatürk University, Istanbul University, Anadolu University and other universities. Even if there is a distance education infrastructure in most universities, the mentioned systems need to adapt to the processes and configurations referred to as "urgent distance education" on some specific applications. Emergency structured distance education is the name of the solutions that are used in a full distance education format and will be replaced by face-to-face education and training at the end of the crisis or the urgent situation (Hodges et al., 2020). Universities, which started looking for a solution after the Covid-19 crisis, quickly commenced activities related to internet-based distance education courses in place of formal education. Thus, trainings were able to be adapted to this process (Kırmızıgül, 2020; Lau et al., 2020). Due to the rapid advancement of the said transition time, it was not possible to make a review of the protocols and practices required for the education (Iyer et al., 2020).

The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of academics who teach in the field of sports sciences towards distance education. It is important to evaluate the general situation of distance education in sports sciences to identify the deficiencies in distance education processes and to make necessary improvements. In the phase of adapting to the new normal that came with Covid-19, studies that will prevent any interruption to the educational processes are essential. Especially in fields such as sports sciences where intense activities are involved, determining the perception towards distance education would make significant contributions to the field and literature.

METHODOLOGY

Type of the research

This study is a descriptive research.

Universe and the sample

The universe of the research consists of the sports academics who participated in the distance education in the Covid-19 period in the 2019-2020 academic year. In the study, 351 sports science academics were reached within the scope of convenience sampling method. The personal information and attitude scale were prepared, distributed and collected online, taking into account the Covid-19 process.

In Table 1, gender, professional seniority and academic levels of the participants are examined. 72.6% of the participants are male, 33.3% of the participants have 20 or more seniority 37.6% are assistant professors.

Data collection tool

In the study, personal information form and attitude scale towards distance education developed by Ağır (2007) were used to collect data. The scale, which consists of two sub-dimensions and a total of 21 items, was developed by grading from (1) (Strongly disagree) to (5) (Strongly agree) as a 5-point Likert type. The scale of attitude towards distance education consists of the Advantages of Distance Education and the Limitations of Distance Education dimensions. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated by Ağir (2007) and the value was found as 0.835. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was determined as 0.824.

Data analysis

SPSS 21 package program was used to analyze the data in the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were used in analyzing the data. In addition, t test and ANOVA test were used to determine the relationships between variables. The skewness and kurtosis values of the scales were taken into account when choosing the test. Since the skewness and kurtosis values of the scales were between 1.96 and -1.96, normality assumption was accepted and parametric tests were applied.

Table 1. Findings related to gender, professional seniority and academic level.

	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	96	27.4
Male	255	72.6
Professional Seniority		
0-5	63	17.9
6-10	69	19.7
11-15	63	17.9
16-20	39	11.1
20 and over	117	33.3
Academic Level		
Research Assistant	45	12.8
Lecturer	54	15.4
Assistant Professor	132	37.6
Associate Professor	84	23.9
Professor	36	10.3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General information about the distance education situation is examined in Table 2. In the distance education process, 71.8% of the participants preferred to use video and 44.2% preferred the text. While 37.6% of the academics have received training in distance education, 62.4% of them have not. 85.5% of the academics stated that they receive technical support from the distance education center when needed. When the tools and equipment used in the distance education process are examined, 95.4% of the academics stated that they use computers, 91.2% use sound systems, 90.6% use cameras and 80.9% use tablets.

59% of the academics participating in the research teach undergraduate, 35.9% teach graduate and 5.1% of them teach both undergraduate and graduate courses. In addition, while 37.6% of the academics have distance education experience, and 62.4% of them do not.

When the descriptive statistics regarding the attitude towards distance education are examined in Table 3, the mean of the advantages of the education subscale is determined as 37.15 ± 11.04; the mean the limitations of the education subscale is 18.61 ± 7.08 and the mean of the overall scale as 55.76 ± 13.79.

In Table 4, the relationship between gender, professional seniority and academic level and attitude towards distance education is analyzed. A significant difference was found in the sub-dimension of limitations of education according to gender ($p < 0.05$). Perceptions of limitations of the education (19.20 ± 7.18) of male academics are more positive for female academics (17.06 ± 6.59). There is a significant difference between all sub-dimensions according to professional seniority ($p < 0.05$). When the perception of the overall situation is examined, the perceptions of the academics with 20 or more seniority towards distance education are the most negative (52.79 ± 10.81). However, the perceptions of academics with 11-15 years of seniority towards distance education are the most positive (62.61 ± 17.51).

There is a significant difference between all sub-dimensions according to the academic level ($p < 0.05$). When the perception of the overall situation is examined, the perceptions of lecturers (51.88 ± 10.67) and associate professors (51.10 ± 12.16) towards distance education are the most negative. However, the perceptions of the assistant professors towards distance education are the most positive (59.31 ± 15.66).

In Table 5, the relationship between distance education status and attitude towards distance education is examined. A significant relationship has been found between the level of courses given in distance education and the limitations of the education ($p <0.05$). Perception of limitations of the education in academics who give postgraduate courses is more positive (24.33 ± 6.41) than the academics who give undergraduate education (17.52 ± 6.53).

Significant relationship was found between the status of participation in lectures/courses/seminars/activities etc. and the advantages of the education and overall perception ($p < 0.05$). The perception of the academics who participate in lectures/courses/seminars/activities etc. towards distance education is more positive (58.98 ± 12.00) than those who do not (53.97 ± 14.41).

A significant relationship was found between the experience of distance education and all sub-dimensions

Table 2. Findings related to distance education status.

	Frequency	%
Preferred educational materials in distance education		
Video	252	71.8
Text	155	44.2
Game	21	6.0
Picture (Drawing, Graphics, Image)	86	24.5
Narrative (Voice)	78	22.2
Simulation	25	7.1
Animation	12	3.4
Educational status related to distance education		
Yes	90	25.6
No	261	74.4
Get technical support from distance education when needed		
Yes	300	85.5
No	51	14.5
Tools and equipment used in distance education		
Computer	335	95.4
Sound System	320	91.2
Tablet	284	80.9
Camera	318	90.6
Projection	47	13.4
Smart Board	38	10.8
Audio/Video Room	20	5.7
Smart Class	26	7.4
Smartphone	63	17.9
Level of courses offered in distance education		
Undergraduate	207	59.0
Graduate	126	35.9
Undergraduate and Graduate	18	5.1
Participation to courses, seminars, events etc. about distance education		
Yes	126	35.9
No	225	64.1
Distance education experience		
Yes	132	37.6
No	219	62.4

Table 3. Descriptive statistics regarding the attitudes towards the distance education.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Advantages of the education	351	14.00	70.00	37.1538	11.04687	-.043	-.282
Limitations of the education	351	7.00	35.00	18.6154	7.08098	.369	-.722
Overall	351	29.00	105.00	55.7692	13.79341	.503	.499

($p < 0.05$). The perception of the academics who have a distance education experience is more positive (60.30 ± 13.87) than the ones who do not have (53.04 ± 13.03).

Table 4. Relationship between gender, professional seniority, academic level and the attitude towards distance education.

	Advantages of the education	Limitations of the education	Overall
	Mean ± ss	Mean ± ss	Mean ± ss
Gender			
Male	37.20 ± 11.81	19.20 ± 7.18	56.40 ± 14.48
Female	37.03 ± 8.72	17.06 ± 6.59	54.09 ± 11.66
t	0.127	2.541	1.398
p	0.899	0.012	0.163
Professional seniority			
0-5	35.71 ± 10.38	20.61 ± 6.18	55.33 ± 9.62
6-10	34.73 ± 9.98	17.69 ± 5.96	55.13 ± 14.35
11-15	42.61 ± 12.41	20.00 ± 6.77	62.61 ± 17.51
16-20	38.61 ± 10.55	15.23 ± 6.81	53.84 ± 16.28
20 and over	34.33 ± 10.35	18.46 ± 7.91	52.79 ± 10.81
F	6.609	4.575	5.799
p	0.000	0.001	0.000
Academic level			
Research assistant	38.06 ± 8.81	18.13 ± 6.47	56.20 ± 9.32
Lecturer	35.50 ± 8.56	16.38 ± 7.16	51.88 ± 10.67
Assistant professor	39.88 ± 11.39	19.43 ± 6.52	59.31 ± 15.66
Associate professor	33.03 ± 11.00	18.07 ± 7.53	51.10 ± 12.16
Professor	38.08 ± 12.77	20.83 ± 7.78	58.91 ± 14.76
F	5.668	2.894	6.518
p	0.000	0.022	0.000

Table 5. Relationship between distance education status and the attitude towards distance education.

	Advantages of the education	Limitations of the education	Overall
	Mean ± sd	Mean ± sd	Mean ± sd
Educational status related to distance education			
Yes	39.07 ± 11.06	18.07 ± 5.16	57.13 ± 12.28
No	36.49 ± 10.99	18.80 ± 7.63	55.30 ± 14.27
t	1.912	0.852	1.088
p	0.057	0.395	0.277
Get technical support from distance education when needed			
Yes	36.97 ± 10.88	18.87 ± 6.99	55.84 ± 13.58
No	38.24 ± 12.01	17.12 ± 7.44	55.35 ± 15.11
t	0.756	1.638	0.233
p	0.450	0.102	0.816
Level of courses given			
Undergraduate	37.96 ± 9.17	17.52 ± 6.53	55.48 ± 13.24
Graduate	33.50 ± 14.16	24.33 ± 6.41	57.83 ± 8.17
Undergraduate and Graduate	36.36 ± 13.11	19.60 ± 7.53	55.95 ± 15.28
F	1.868	10.037	0.258
p	0.156	0.000	0.773

Table 5. Continues.

Participation to courses, seminars, events etc. about distance education			
Yes	39.43 ± 10.62	19.55 ± 6.04	58.98 ± 12.00
No	35.88 ± 11.09	18.09 ± 7.56	53.97 ± 14.41
t	2.918	1.852	3.306
p	0.004	0.065	0.001
Distance education experience			
Yes	39.77 ± 11.38	20.52 ± 6.64	60.30 ± 13.87
No	35.58 ± 10.55	17.47 ± 7.10	53.04 ± 13.03
t	3.503	4.001	4.929
p	0.001	0.000	0.000

CONCLUSION

The fact that face-to-face training had to be suspended for a while in the Covid-19 epidemic has created the environment for the distance education carried out on the internet. Especially with the rapid occurrence of the pandemic, the sudden transition to the system has brought the necessity of eliminating the disruptions in the distance education system and its progress. Including the students' feedback in the evaluation phase and determining the requested and expected situations from the education directly affects the adaptation rate to this process. In this regard, it is also important to determine the methods of access with students more easily and to inform students and administrators through the internet and media. It is expected that distance education, which is considered as an alternative to formal education in today's world, will soon become the core education method.

In this study, the perceptions of sports academics towards the distance education process were evaluated. In the distance education process, 71.8% of the participants preferred to use video and 44.2% preferred to use text.

85.5% of the academics stated that they receive technical support from the distance education center when needed. Kayaduman and Demirel (2019) stated in their study that the instructors need technical support in their first distance education experience.

When the tools and equipment used in the distance education process are examined, 95.4% of the academics stated that they use computers, 91.2% use sound systems, 90.6% use cameras and 80.9% use tablets. In Alakoç's (2001) research named “Distance Education and An Application” conducted with 55 faculty members and 300 students, it has been determined that the most effective distance education method is the internet today while methods such as TV, mail, web page, and books take up less space.

59% of the academics participating in the research teach undergraduate, 35.9% teach graduate and 5.1% teach both undergraduate and graduate level courses. In the study of Horzum (2003), it is seen that the attitude towards internet-based education varies accordingly with academic titles. It has shown that while professors and research assistants think that internet-supported education can meet the needs of students, lecturers, professors and associate professors think that internet-supported education can be used to close the physical environment gap

In addition, while 37.6% of the academics have distance education experience, and 62.4% of them do not. Ağıl (2007) found in his study that the distance education experiences of teachers were not sufficient, and this situation created a negative attitude towards distance education.

The relationship between gender, professional seniority, academic level and attitude towards distance education was examined. Perception towards the limitations of education is more positive among female academics than the male academics. When the perception of the overall situation is examined, the perception of academics with 20 or more seniority towards distance education is the most negative. However, the perceptions of academics with 11-15 years of seniority towards distance education are the most positive. The perceptions of lecturers and associate professors towards distance education are the most negative. However, the perceptions of assistant professors towards distance education are the most positive.

The relationship between distance education status and attitude towards distance education has been examined. Perceptions of the academics who teach postgraduate courses towards the limitations of education are more positive than academics who teach undergraduate courses. Kaya et al. (2017) aimed to examine the views of academics about the application of distance education in graduate education programs in the department of educational sciences. As a result of semi-structured interviews with academics working in the relevant field, it was stated that the academics generally

viewed the distance education negatively and that distance education remained in the shadow of the traditional face-to-face education.

Perceptions of the academics who participate in distance education related lectures/courses/seminars/events etc. are more positive than those who do not. Perception of academics with distance education experience is more positive than those who do not. Kayaduman and Demirel (2019) investigated the concerns of trainers who experienced distance education for the first time, towards distance education systems using the worry-based adaptation model. As a result of the research, in order to relieve the trainers' concerns about distance education they suggested that there is need of providing trainers with technological, pedagogical and content training and of providing them working examples related to distance education as well as of cooperation.

The necessary technical infrastructure and equipment must be provided for the quality of distance education. Muhirwa (2009) stated that international distance education methods and technologies are seen as cost-effective ways of rescuing educational institutions in developing countries. He tried to analyze the interaction between students in Mali and Burkina Faso and their French and Canadian instructors within the framework of distance education. As a result of the research, they cited Internet connection problems, limited computer access by students, lack of qualified instructors, unprepared local teachers, unfamiliarity with software and computer technology, insufficient technical support, weak social dynamics, student-learner conflict, student-instructor conflict, and students dropping out of education as obstacles to quality interaction in distance education.

As a result, it is necessary to undergo a detailed training of the lecturers first in order to provide distance education in sports sciences more effectively. With the training given to lecturers, it is expected that students' behaviors and thoughts about distance education and their opinions about lessons will take shape at a significant level. It is thought that theoretical courses in distance education and sports sciences will be beneficial in terms of both time and money. The responsibility of the adaptation of the lecturers, informing the students about the process and establishing the infrastructure of the institution falls on the university administrations and their role in the process is very essential.

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