



An investigation of the prospective teachers' viewpoints about distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The recent COVID-19 pandemic affected educational systems around the world. In order to prevent the virus from spreading, educational institutions around the world have adapted distance education—universities being no exception. To ensure that students benefit the most from online teaching, it is necessary to discover views and suggestions of students to align distance education in parallel to their needs. In this milieu, preservice teachers' views are especially significant for they will implement distance education when they become professional teachers in near future. Thus, the primary purpose of the study was to determine positive and negative aspects of distance education in effect during COVID-19 pandemic, and to uncover suggestions for improving it from the perspective of preservice teachers in College of Education at Aksaray University. A qualitative approach was adapted to achieve the research aim. Data were collected from 214 students registered to an undergraduate program by asking them open-ended questions about their positive and negative views as well as suggestions on distance education. Data were analyzed iteratively as a result of which codes and themes were created. Results indicate that five themes construct participants' view on distance education: Advantages, Personal Development, Internet Connection, Instruction, Other. Generally, it was found that distance education provided many benefits such as giving chances to students to repeat the material, providing equity in opportunity for students, helping students to gain the habit of time management, being efficient and economical, establishing continuity, being helpful to students who need assistance, and being environment friendly by saving paper waste. On the other hand, it is ineffective due to absence of live lectures, lack of technological devices, internet quota, problems because of infrastructure and family environment.

Keywords: COVID-19, Distance education, Online teaching, Preservice teachers.

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1. Introduction

Human beings have utilized various tools and technologies to satisfy their educational needs. The invention of printing press accelerated the education process and increased knowledge level of masses. In addition to printing press, industrialization in compliance with advancing science and technology gave rise to information technologies. Such changes and improvements have altered the delivery of instruction (Kivunja, 2015; Scott, 2015). The changes and improvements in information and technology necessitated the utilization of letters, journals, newspapers, radio-television and so forth in education.

At the present time, computers and internet have become one of the most prominent ways of instructional delivery (Kör, Çataloğlu, ve Erbay, 2013). Information and communication technologies are effectively and efficiently being employed not only in the traditional vis-à-vis instruction but also in distance education. The utilization of information and communication technologies is defined with regards to the purposes and usage areas of distance education. A widespread phenomenon, distance education implies various meanings. For example, according to Çağıltay (2002), distance education is a method that can be used when face-to-face cannot be utilized due to some shortcomings of traditional approach. Jones (2005) argues that distance education allows individuals to be instructed outside of the classroom without being at the same environment as the instructor. To Moore and Kearsley (1996), it is a type of education that sets learners free from the bounds of physical environment and distance. Simonson, Schlosser, & Orellana (2011) state that it is a way for the learner and the instructor to employ communication channels at different locations. Finally, Menchaca and Bekele (2008), highlights that it includes learning activities that occur in different places by the use of letters, journals, newspapers as well as e-mail and internet. Synthesizing the definitions of distance education, it is a type of education that takes place in different settings, synchronously or asynchronously, by the use of information and communication technologies. According to Jones (2005), distance education has gone through three eras till today. In the first era, the communication between learners and instructors were carried out by using conventional ways. In the second, audio and video-based communication tools had taken a great effect on education. In the last era, today, computers, mobile phones and internet are in use. In the first and second eras, student-to-student and student-to-instructor communication were limited. However, nowadays, interactive communication such as video conferencing is being utilized (Tuncer ve Taşpınar, 2008).

In terms of the third and most recent era, the last 20 years have witnessed a digital transformation in instruction, especially in higher education as more and more institutions adapt recent information and communication technologies. The purposes of employing distance education in higher education varies: helping students to acquire more information (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Gregory & Lodge, 2015; Shih, Muñoz, &

Sánchez, 2006), reducing workload of academicians, cost reduction, increasing the quality of instruction, increasing the prestige of the institution and enriching instructional processes (Baggaley, 2008; Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Hall & Knox, 2009; İşman, 2011; Menchaca & Bekele, 2008; Sarıkaya & Öztürk, 2017; Shih, Muñoz & Sánchez, 2006; Uşun, 2006). In addition to these purposes, unforeseen global emergencies as well necessitate the utilization of distance education. One such example is the recent COVID-19 pandemic that affected educational systems globally. In order to prevent the virus from spreading, universities around the world have adapted distance education—online teaching that allows learners and instructors to be in different spaces by using information and communication technologies (Simonson, Schlosser, & Orellana, 2011).

The idea to stop the spread of the virus has resulted in quick changes in delivery of instruction in many countries around the world (Buluk & Eşitti, 2020; Kanar & Arı, 2020). In one such country, Turkey, universities immediately adapted distance education for some of the courses they offer as a response to a call from Council of Higher Education by putting their experiences of pre-pandemic period. In the final analysis, as the distance education is the main form of education for all the universities in the country, many different views in terms of advantages and disadvantages of it have arisen. Depending on their technological infrastructure, some universities employ synchronous learning, asynchronous learning or a mixed version of the two (Serçemeli & Kurnaz, 2020). Asynchronous distance education aims to have a student-centered approach rather than a teacher-centered one whereas synchronous one primarily strives to establish interactive communication between learners and teacher (Işık, Karacı, Özkaraca ve Biroğul, 2010).

1.1. The Importance of Study

Utilization of distance education in a prevalent manner during the pandemic sets the stage for discussions on using distance education in all level of education even after the pandemic is over. Therefore, it is only logical to take necessary steps to align distance education in parallel to today's needs, to increase its quality, to upgrade technological infrastructure as to ensure equality of opportunity for all students (Galusha, 1998; Rice, 2014). In this context, it is necessary to take into consideration expectations and demands of students and faculty in terms of distance education to overcome the shortcomings that may occur in future to make sure an efficient educational environment. In line of this line of thinking, this study sets out to investigate preservice teachers' views and suggestions in terms of distance education as preservice teachers themselves will implement it when they become professional teachers in near future. A review of the literature on distance education has indicated that pre- and in-pandemic research has focused on (1) the historical development of it, (2) use of information and communication technologies in education, and (3) the future of distance education. This

study, however, aims to examine prospective teacher's views and suggestions on distance education to contribute to advancement of distance education—e.g., in terms of program contents. Moreover, the literature review has yielded no study on views and suggestions of preservice teachers on distance education. As the present study intends to study views of preservice teachers in a school of education as a whole rather than focusing on views of some departments, results of the study may be instrumental in improving quality of distance education in colleges of education as well as setting an example for other colleges or schools.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of the study is to determine positive and negative aspects of distance education in effect during COVID-19 pandemic, and to uncover suggestions for improving it from the perspective of preservice teachers. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the views and suggestions of preservice teachers on distance education at the College of Education at a state university in Turkey during Spring term of 2019-2020 academic year.

In compliance with this purpose, the study aims to answer following research questions:

1. How do preservice teachers evaluate distance education in effect during COVID-19 period in terms of its positive aspects?
2. How do preservice teachers evaluate distance education in effect during COVID-19 period in terms of its negative aspects?
3. What are preservice teachers' suggestions to improve distance education so that it is effective and efficient?

2. Method

2.1. Design of the study

The study employed a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. In other words, the study strived to identify what experiences preservice teachers go through and how they make sense of their experiences in regards to distance education. In that regard, design of the study mostly resembles phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007). The research approach employed in the study is expected to study preservice teachers' experiences in more depth.

2.1. Participant (subject) characteristics

Participants of the study were 214 students registered to an undergraduate program at College of Education at a state university in Turkey. In choosing the participants, convenience sampling was employed.

Table 1 represents distribution of participants with regard to their program.

Program	Number of students	Percentage
<i>Psychological counseling and guidance</i>	94	44
<i>Mathematics</i>	33	15,4
<i>Turkish</i>	24	11,2
<i>Social Sciences</i>	23	10,7
<i>English</i>	20	9,2
<i>Elementary school</i>	10	4,7
<i>Science</i>	5	2,4
<i>Art (Painting)</i>	5	2,4
Total	214	%100

As can be seen from Table 1, a total of 214 participants from eight different programs contributed in the study. Out of 214, 94 of participants are teacher candidates in Psychological Counseling and Guidance (%44), 33 in Mathematics (%15,4), 24 in Turkish (%11,2), 23 in Social Sciences (%10,7), 20 in English (%9.2), 10 in Elementary school (%4,7), 5 in Science (%2,4) and 5 in Art (%2,4).

2.2. Data Collection

The main question that guided the data collection process was “What are the positive and negative aspects of distance education during COVID-19 pandemic.” In relation to the main question, students, enrolled in one of History of Turkish Education, History of Education, Guidance and Family Therapy courses, voluntarily answered open-ended questions regarding distance education and their views on it. Patton’s (2014, p. 341) idea guided the data collection period: “We interview people on things that we cannot observe directly. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. Also, we cannot observe situations where there is no observer. We cannot observe how individuals organize their lives and how they make sense of things that happen in their lives. We have to ask questions to people to learn about such things.”

2.3. Data analysis

As the study is a qualitative one and data were collected via open-ended questions, the researchers employed content analysis by way of open coding (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2011). Participant responses were transformed into electronic files. The researchers read through data to come up with codes in an iterative process. After that, they examined

codes to create themes. As a result of this process, 31 codes and five themes were subtracted from the data. What is more, codes and themes were presented and interpreted in regard to research questions. Finally, direct quotations from participants responses were embedded in the writing. In doing so, participants were given abbreviations that reflect their program and number in the data. For example, a direct quotation from a participant in Psychological Counseling and Guidance program whose responses were turned into an electronic file first would have the abbreviation PCG1.

3. Results

Results of the analysis are presented in two sections. In the first, participants' views on positive and negative aspects of distance education as well as their suggestions on how to improve it are included. In the second, a closer look to their views and suggestions is provided by examining codes and themes. Out of 214 participants, 178 of them have positive views, 169 have negative views on distance education. Besides, participants in their responses have 63 suggestions.

3.1. Positive views on education in regard to participants' program

Table 2. Distribution of participants who had positive view on distance education with regard to their program

Program	Positive view	Percentage (%)
Psychological counseling and guidance	92	52
Mathematics	22	12,3
English	19	10,6
Social Sciences	18	10,1
Turkish	12	6,7
Elementary school	9	5
Science	4	2,2
Art (Painting)	2	1,1
Total	178	100 (%)

Table 2 indicates that out of 178 participants who had positive views on distance education, 52% are in Psychological Counseling and Guidance, 12,3% in Mathematics, 10,6% in English, 10,1% in Social Sciences, 6.7% in Turkish, 5% in Elementary Education, 2,2% in Science and 1,1 in Art. Some of the views that participants had are as follows:

PCG1: The transformation process from traditional instruction to distance education was managed well in terms of communication with instructors as we

were able reach our instructors either by phone, email or even social media. No questions left hanging.

PCG2: As we are at home all the time during the pandemic, we do not have problems in terms of finding time. We can read books and articles that we couldn't read before. Therefore, this process is positive for personal development.

Eng14: Thanks to distance education, we were able to keep learning even though we weren't in the classroom. We could watch videos and check documents that our instructors uploaded any time we liked. Students could rewind the videos to repeat any parts or watch it again from beginning to end. Even though face-to-face instruction couldn't keep on, students were able to continue their classes and keep up with their program.

TUR7: Videos that were uploaded to the learning management system will be up there ready to be watched all summer. One of the advantages of distance education is that instructors share course materials with students.

3.2. Negative views on distance education in regard to participants' program

A total 169 participants manifested negative views on distance education. Table 3 includes the distribution of participants who had negative views on distance education with regard to their program.

Table 3. Distribution of participants who had negative view on distance education with regard to their program

Program	Negative View	Percentage
Psychological counseling and guidance	84	49,7
Social Sciences	23	13,6
Turkish	23	13,6
Mathematics	16	9,6
Elementary school	10	5,9
English	8	4,8
Science	3	1,7
Art (Painting)	2	1,1
Total	169	100

As Table 3 shows, 169 participants manifested negative views on distance education. Out of 169 participants who had negative views on distance education, 49,7% are in Psychological Counseling and Guidance program, 13,6% in Social Sciences, 13,6% in Turkish, 9,6% in Mathematics, 5,9% in Elementary Education, 4,8% in English, 1,7 in Science and 1,1 in Art. Some of the views that participants had are as follows:

PCG4: In terms of its negative sides, we can't understand everything fully in distance education as we would with traditional instruction. And since some of our friends do not have necessary technological tools to follow courses, they are left behind. Also, order and discipline disappear in distance education. For that reason, we can't fully realize the premise of education.

SS13: We are counted present if we watch videos. How that is reflected to the system, we students can't see. The system should be improved so that students can watch videos in more than one sitting continuing where they left off previously while also system shows exactly how many minutes students watched. Besides, some students couldn't access videos due to lack of electronic devices stemming from financial issues.

TUR6: Distance education doesn't feel like actual school. The communication with teachers was limited. We could ask any question that come to our mind during vis-à-vis instruction. We could get a response immediately too. However, in distance education, we either get a delayed response to our questions or no response at all. It is hard to get in contact with the teacher. Also, student-student interaction is gone.

Art: Some days I wasn't able to watch lectures due to no internet.

3.3. Suggestions in regard to participants' program

A total 63 participants had suggestion with regard to distance education. Table 4 depicts participants' suggestions.

Table 4. Distribution of Participants who Had Suggestions on Distance Education in Regard to their program

Program	Number of suggestions	Percentage
Psychological Counseling and Guidance	38	60,3
Social Sciences	7	11,1
Turkish	7	11,1
Mathematics	4	6,3
English	4	6,3
Elementary Education	3	4,9
Science	0	0
Art (Painting)	0	0
Total	63	%100

As can be seen from Table 4, 60.3% of suggestions are from Psychological Counseling and Guidance, 11,1% from Social Sciences, 11,1% from Turkish, 6,3% from Mathematics, 6,3% from English, 4,9% Elementary Education whereas participants from Science and

Art programs did not have any suggestions on distance education. Some of the suggestions that participants put forward are as follows:

SS4: Attendance should be mandatory. Instructors should check if students watch the videos from beginning to end or not.

SS6: Different materials should be used, not just videos. Especially students who don't have technological devices should be supported.

Tur3: Students should be given free internet so that they can use it to access learning management system. Unfortunately, not everybody has the same infrastructure. Not everybody might have internet. Even if a student has the connection, it might not be active. For example, I am a student who lives in a village. I didn't have any problems as my village has the connection but I am sure there are places where the connection is a big issue.

Mat1: Instructors need to employ attention gathering techniques as they shoot lecture videos. For example, they should change their voices as they speak instead of having a monotonous voice. That would increase instructors' control over his audience. Synchronous lectures would make classes more enjoyable; I think.

3.4. Codes and themes for positive and negative sides of distance education as well as suggestions

The analysis of participants' responses yielded 30 codes under five main themes in regard to positive and negative aspects of distance education as well as of participant suggestions to improve it. These themes are: Advantages, Personal Development, Internet Connection, Instruction, Others. Table 5 summarizes these themes and codes.

Table 5. Main themes and Codes

Themes	Codes	Frequency	Total	Percentage
Advantages	Repeating	83	196	46,3
	Equity in Opportunity	43		
	Time Management	20		
	Efficiency	23		
	Economy	13		
	Continuity	5		
	Students who need assistance	7		
	Environment Friendly	2		
Personal Development	Interaction	20	75	18,2
	Self-discipline	10		
	Personal pace	10		
	Protecting health	8		
	Attendance	7		
	Irresponsibility against courses	7		
	Motivation	5		
	Boringness	3		
	Life long learning	3		
Emotion	2			
Internet Connection	Lack of internet	30	70	17,2
	Audio and quality	12		
	Technology	12		
	Financial support	10		
	Infrastructure	6		
Instruction	Question-answer	18	58	14,1
	Assignment	18		
	Different methods and techniques	10		
	Exam	9		
Other	Material-Content	3	17	4,2
	Family	12		
	Teacher	5		
	Total	410	410	%100

3.4.1. Positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to Advantage theme

Table 6 presents eight codes under Advantage theme.

Table 6. Codes for Advantage theme

Theme	Codes	Positive	Negative	Suggestion	Total
Advantage	Repeating	83	-	-	196
	Equity in Opportunity	31	8	4	
	Time Management	18	2	-	
	Efficiency	5	16	2	
	Economy	11	2	-	
	Continuity	4	1	-	
	Students who need assistance	6	1	-	
Environment Friendly	2	-	-		
Total	8 codes	160	30	6	

As can be seen in Table 6, codes under Advantage themes are Repeating, Equity in Opportunity, Time Management, Efficiency, Economy, Continuity, Students who need assistance and Environment Friendly. Eighty-three participants stated that distance education gives them a chance to repeat the material whenever and wherever they like. Moreover, 31 participants pointed out that it ensures equity in opportunity for students whereas 8 participants did not agree with that idea. Four of these participants had suggestion to create equity in opportunity in distance education. In terms of time management code, 18 participants argued that distance education provides opportunities for time management, yet, two participants stated that it creates negative situation for time management. Five participants were of the opinion that it is efficient whereas 16 participants thought that it is not efficient. Two of these participants provided suggestions to increase the efficiency of distance education. In terms of economy, 11 participants had positive views, two participants declared that distance education is not economic. Four students had positive views, one student had negative views on it with regard to continuity. Similarly, six participants thought that it is helpful to students with special needs whereas one student argued otherwise. Finally, in the mind of two participants, distance education saves paper waste and hence it is environment friendly. Some of the views of participants within Advantage theme are provided here:

Positive Views

PCG63: The fact weekly materials would remain accessible on the system is a big advantage. This way we can re-watch lectures and be able to repeat (Repeat).

Eng4: Videos and course materials can be watched anytime. Distance education allows students rewind or re-watch videos if they do not understand subject matter or simply want to repeat. Even though it is not traditional instruction, it helps students to learn (Repeat).

Esc8: Distance education is helpful since it provides equity in opportunity for all students (equity in opportunity).

Negative Views

SS3: Just following video courses was not enough, they weren't effective (Efficiency)

Tur7: Having everything under our reach made us lazier. Also I think some of the assignments didn't motivate us to study. Watching course videos wasn't efficient (efficiency).

SS16: I think that distance education negatively affected motivation of not only our teachers but also ours. True, our teachers continued classes by recording videos but they weren't as effective as in-class teaching (efficiency).

Suggestions

SS17: Distance education requires access to such communication devices as internet, television, computer, tablet, phone etc. Not all students might have these devices, so, they may not be able to benefit from distance education (equity in opportunity)

PCG42: My suggestion is that classes should take place at the same time as usual with the attendance of whole class (efficiency).

Tur8: My suggestion is that online classes have a set time as regular classes and they are done synchronously, that we can reach the teacher as the lecture is in motion (efficiency).

3.4.2. Positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to Personal Development theme

Personal Development theme includes eight codes: Interaction, self-discipline, Personal pace, Protecting health, Attendance, Irresponsibility against courses, Motivation, Boringness. Table 7 shows positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to codes under Personal Development Theme.

Table 7. Codes for Personal Development theme

Theme	Codes	Positive	Negative	Suggestion	Total
Personal Development	Interaction	-	16	4	75
	Self-discipline	1	10	-	
	Personal pace	5	5	-	
	Protecting health	3	4	1	
	Attendance	1	6	-	
	Irresponsibility against courses	2	7	-	
	Motivation	1	6	-	
	Boringness	-	3	-	
Total	8 codes	13	57	5	

An examination of codes under Personal Development theme yields that no participants had positive views for interaction code in that 16 of them reported that distance education is inadequate to ensure interaction. Similarly, four student provided

suggestions to add the element of interaction to it. For self-discipline code; one student had positive view, ten students had negative views and no participants had any suggestions. For personal pace; five students were of the opinion that distance education allows personal pace in following lectures whereas five students argued the opposite. For protecting health, three participants stated that distance education helps protecting health by not allowing personal contact between students whereas four students pointed out that distance education requires students to be in front of a screen all time and hence deteriorate physical and psychological health. For attendance, one student thought attendance not being compulsory was a good thing whereas six students found it negative. For irresponsibility against courses, two participants declared that distance education developed their responsibility against their classes while seven students stated it worsened their responsibility. For motivation, one student agreed that it increased motivation, yet, six students made it clear that it decreased their motivation immensely. For boringness, three participants expressed that distance education is boring. Some of the views and suggestion under Personal Development theme are as follows:

Positive Views

SS13: Students found a chance to analyze their own learning style and follow courses at their own pace (personal pace).

PCG54: The advantage of distance education is that it allows us to continue our education in the days of pandemic. We can keep learning at home or at a place where there is net connection (health).

Tur3: Students' efforts, attendance and motivation helped them to make the most of this process (motivation).

Negative Views

SS19: This system caused students to detach themselves from courses and school. I believe that knowing that you have class in the morning, so, you have to wake up, affects people and helps them organize their lives. In addition, it helps people to gain a sense of responsibility to know that he can't be late for class or he needs to keep quiet in classroom (irresponsibility against courses).

SS16: Distance education creates more problems than it solves, I think. The first problem is that students don't follow lectures in an actual classroom. And that causes motivational problems as students do not feel as students. Besides, it decreases student-to-student communication, no sharing notes, no communication of ideas (motivation).

PCG49: I can say that courses become boring and hard to follow in distance education in comparison to actual classroom where there be would be question-answer and a sense of conversation (boringness).

Suggestions

PCG34: The attendance must be mandatory (attendance).

3.4.3. Positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to Internet Connection theme

Internet connection theme involves five codes: lack of internet, audio and quality, technology, financial support, infrastructure. Table 8 includes positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to codes under Internet Connection Theme.

Table 8. Codes for Internet Connection Theme

Theme	Codes	Positive	Negative	Suggestion	Total
Internet Connection	Lack of internet	-	25	4	70
	Audio and quality	-	9	4	
	Technology	1	8	3	
	Financial support	-	5	4	
	Infrastructure	-	3	4	
Total	5 codes	1	50	19	70

In terms of lack of internet, 24 participants had negative views and four forwarded suggestions. Additionally, nine participants stated that distance education leads to audio and quality problems and four students had suggestion to overcome the issue of audio and quality. Only one participant argues that distance education stimulates students to work with technology whereas eight participants mentioned that it is quite possible to encounter technological problems in distance education. Three participants had suggestions to solve technological problems. For financial support, five participants stated that they weren't supported enough to have technological tools. Also, four participants suggested ideas by arguing that financial support to students in distance education would establish equity in opportunity. Three participants expressed their ideas that distance education was not efficient for all students as the internet infrastructure was not at the same level of quality in different parts of the country. Moreover, four students suggested that internet service providers need to straighten the infrastructure over the country. Interestingly, there was only one positive view in Internet Connection theme whereas there were 50 negative views and 19 suggestions. Some of the views and suggestion under Personal Development theme are as follows:

Positive View

Eng3: As we continue our education and do the assignments in distance education, we use different types of technology and we discover a new one as we do (technology).

Negative Views

Eng13: I don't think that every student has necessary technological tools and good internet (lack of internet).

Sci8: Our friends who live in rural areas or who doesn't have a computer or net connection might have had real troubles (lack of internet)

Mat28: It was a really hard time for students who live away from central areas or who didn't have technological tools to do homeworks (lack of internet).

Suggestions

SS30: Students should receive more support in terms of internet (lack of internet).

Tur18: Students should have easy access to internet. If students don't have net connection or devices, they shouldn't be held responsible (lack of internet)

PCG45: Audio and visual quality need to be improved. Connectivity and attendance problems should be resolved (audio and quality)

3.4.4. Positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to Instruction theme

The theme of Instruction includes five themes: Question-answer, Assignment, Different methods and techniques, Material-Content, and Exam. Table 9 summarizes positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to codes under Instruction Theme.

Table 9. Codes for Instruction Theme

Theme	Code	Positive	Negative	Suggestion	Total
Instruction	Question-answer	-	11	7	58
	Assignment	9	9	3	
	Different methods and techniques	-	3	5	
	Material-Content	-	-	3	
	Exam	3	3	2	
Total	5 codes	12	26	20	58

As can be seen from Table 9, participants stated that question-answer method was not utilized effectively as none them had positive views of it and 11 of them had negative views. In addition, seven of the participants provided suggestions on it that there should be instant questions as the lecture is in progress. Participants argued that it would increase retention rates if instructors upload questions of the topic and if there were discussions via online platforms from these questions. In terms of Assignment code, nine participants found assignment in distance education helpful whereas another nine thought that they were negative. Also, three participants had suggestions that

assignments should encourage research, personal development, investigation and critical thinking to make them more helpful in distance education. In terms of different methods and techniques, participants generally had negative views, which could be interpreted as a disliking against lecturing in distance education videos. Also, participants suggested that instructors should use different methods and techniques to enrich the delivery of instruction. Similarly, participants also pointed out that their instructors did not employ a variety of materials. Three participants suggested that different and interesting materials should be utilized to ensure that lecture videos are not boring. In exam code, three participants had positive views on exam application in distance education whereas three students had negative views. Participants recommend that online exams at a given time should be employed to ensure objectivity. Some of the views and suggestion under Instruction theme are as follows:

Positive Views

Eng13: Since midterm and final exams were in the form of take-home assignments, it took stress factor away and helped us to focus on research and learning (exam).

Mat21: Assignments helped students to keep focus and learn more about the subject (Assignment)

PCG59: One nice thing about distance education is that exams were in the form of assignment. This way, we get a chance to apply what we learn and we prevent any attempt to do misdeed in online exams (Assignment)

Negative Views

PCG71: For my program (Psychological Counseling and Guidance), I don't think that distance education is helpful. Most of our courses, maybe all of them, take place as a result of condense interaction between our instructor and us. We converse and employ question-answer method. We weren't able to create that environment in distance education and that influenced me in a bad way (question-answer).

Eng14: Negative sides of distance education are not being able to listen to instructor effectively, not being able to ask questions, issue of attention, internet connection needed to watch lecture videos, problem with taking notes. If there is something that I need further clarification, I send an email to the instructor, then, I get a response the following day or the day after. I don't pay too much attention to that delayed response then (question-answer).

Tur14: Assignments instead of actual exams might result in students not paying attention to the classes.

Suggestions

Tur5: I think a platform should be added to distance education system for us to ask questions. Also, there should be forum for discussions. Besides, if a student doesn't watch a lecture on the week that it was due, the student should be counted as absent.

PCG68: I think there should be a set of questions that students can write their answers and send it to the instructor (question-answer).

PCG62: A platform could be created on the system where we ask our questions to the instructor (question-answer).

PCG25: The absence of question-answer as in face-to-face instruction affected us. For that, there would be a platform where we post our questions and then the instructor would reply (question-answer)

3.4.5. Positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to Other theme

The Other theme includes two codes that are family and instructor. Table 10 presents positive and negative views as well as suggestions in regard to codes under Other Theme.

Table 10. Codes for Other Theme

Theme	Code	Positive	Negative	Suggestion	Total
Other	Family	-	11	1	17
	Instructor	2	3	-	
Total	2 codes	2	14	1	17

As summarized in Table 10, no participants were of the opinion that their families were a positive contributor to the process of distance education. In that regard, 11 participants argued that such problems as having siblings in the family environment and sharing the computer with them, having an internet quota and especially for girls being expected to help with house chores occur in the family environment. One student had suggested that there be should seminar for family members to inform them on distance education so that they would aim to create more supportive environment for their students. In terms of instructor, two students pointed out that instructors performed their duties outstandingly whereas three students argued that their instructors were not that effective during distance education. Some of the views and suggestion under Other theme are as follows:

Positive Views

No participants had positive views on family code.

PCG43: We didn't have any negative situation stemming from instructors in this process. It is a sign that our instructors value us that they regularly uploaded

video lectures to the system. Also, they paid close attention to their students and provided any help that they could (instructor).

PCG43: I think that the process of communication between instructor and students were undertaken quite effectively. We were able to contact our instructors by phone, by email and by social media accounts such as Facebook and so there were no questions left lingering in the air (instructor)

Negative Views

PCG78: Unfortunately I didn't find distance education that useful. Because I had a hard time explaining this process to my family. I couldn't explain to my family that my courses were still on that schools weren't in recess (family).

Mat18: Students might not have a hospitable environment for distance education (family)

ESc14: Due to my family environment, I am the one who take care of my family and as my responsibilities grow in this process, I had difficulties manage everything. If traditional education continued, I would be away from such familial responsibilities and I wouldn't have had psychological deterioration that I had. I would be able to focus on my courses better (family)

Suggestion

PCG51: This situation doesn't only affect students. Families experience the same type problems that students encounter in distance education. Families who had no prior experience in distance education can't support their student effectively. Therefore, families should be trained on how to provide an enriching environment that would be supportive to the students (family)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

An analysis of the findings of the study reveals that distance education provides many benefits such as giving chances to students to repeat the material, providing equity in opportunity for students, helping students to gain the habit of time management (Oyarzun, Martin & Moore, 2020), being efficient and economical (Walker & Fraser, 2005), establishing continuity, being helpful to students who need assistance (Howard, Mulligan Ault, Knowlton & Swall, 1992), and being environment friendly by saving paper waste (Harizan, Hilmi & Atan, 2015). In that regard, the cynosure finding was that distance education is advantageous for students with special needs. A similar point was also discussed by Çetin and Ercan (2021) in terms of positive and negative effects of distance education in their study on autists. In terms of efficiency, majority of the participants have negative views on distance education and they provided many suggestions to make it more efficient. Similar points were also discussed in a research by Uyar (2020). It is concluded that distance education ineffective due to absence of live

lectures, lack of technological devices, internet quota, problems because of infrastructure, family environment.

In relation to personal development theme of distance education, no participants had positive views on interaction code. Similar findings are also pointed out by Buluk and Eşitti (2020). Participants have equal numbers of positive and negative views on personal pace, which can be interpreted that students' willingness to benefit from distance education rather than the system that is applied has more effect on personal pace (Moore, 1986). A majority of the participants state that distance education does not establish student-student and student-instructor interaction (Beldarrain, 2006). There are suggestions that there should be synchronous and interactive lectures. Findings of the study indicate that distance education is ineffective in ensuring that students develop a habit of self-discipline. Besides, from the perspective participants, it directly or indirectly leads to health problems (e.g., eye health, radiation exposure, obesity, stress, depression, etc.). Moreover, since there was no compulsory attendance, it resulted in students not being responsible for following lectures, which caused a decrease in students' motivation to study. It can be deduced from these findings that the efficiency of distance education is directly proportional to students' sense of responsibility. Similar findings are also reviewed in a study by Başaran, Doğan, Karaoğlu & Şahin (2020).

With regard to internet connection theme, it is seen that participants mention such negative views on distance education as lack of internet, audial and visual problems in lecture videos, use of technology, financial support and infrastructure (Atan, Sulaiman, Rahman & Idrus, 2002). A great number of participants complained about restrictive effect of internet quotas. They also suggest that this unpleasant situation can be reversed by providing students with financial support and internet access. Another negative view on distance education is that lecture videos contain audial and visual problems, which results in a decrease in students' will and motivation to follow lecture videos. What is more, participants complained about lack newer and faster technological devices that they could use in distance education as well as infrastructural problems in internet. Similar findings are achieved in studies by Bayburtlu (2020) and Bakioğlu & Çevik (2020). In terms of internet connection, infrastructure and technological devices; Hebebcı, Bertiz & Alan (2020), Uzun, Eş Çakıcı, & Evram (2020), and Karagöz, Ağadayı, & Başer (2020) achieved comparable results.

In terms of instruction theme, it is seen that positive views on assignments and exams in the form of assignments outweigh negative views. Similarly, Kanar & Arı (2020) found that assignments instead of traditional exams are liked by students, which resembles the findings in this study. However, participants do not favor asynchronous form of distance education since it does not allow instantaneous question-answer. In this context, participants suggest either synchronous lectures or some other platforms that would allow students to ask their questions and get responses from the instructor (Murphy,

Rodríguez-Manzanares & Barbour, 2011). Participants also argued that instructors do not employ different methods and techniques in their delivery of the content in videos, which prevents providing an enriched online environment to students. This finding is supported by a study by Osmanoglu (2020).

The remaining findings that were put under Other theme yield that familial environments were hostile for distance education (Waterhouse, Samra & Lucassen, 2020). To overcome this problem, participants suggest that families should be informed on how to create a fruitful environment at home so that their students make the most of distance education. As for instructors, some participants stated that the instructors had enough knowledge on distance education and reflected this knowledge in creating enjoyable lectures. Similar findings can also be seen in a study by Kurnaz and Serçemeli (2020). Nonetheless, majority of the students mentioned that their instructors did not have enough knowledge and experience on how to utilize distance education effectively, and that this inexperience led inefficient lectures.

The findings of the study are limited to the views of preservice teachers from one college of education. Thus, a study on preservice teachers' views and suggestions with a wider sample would contribute to new dimensions on discussions about distance education. Besides, the data for this study were collected from participants based on their experiences with distance education in one semester. A longitudinal study to check how preservice teachers view change between time intervals would enrich the field's understanding of distance education.

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