





The COVID-19 Pandemic, University Students in Turkey, and Emergency Online Learning

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Abstract

In this study, we determined how university students in Turkey, a developing country, were able to transition into emergency online learning during COVID-19, what challenges they faced, and the positive experiences that may have come out of this process. We also explored how their positive and negative emotional states may have changed as a result of COVID-19. The sample included 125 students studying in different universities across Turkey who answered an online questionnaire. Results indicated that students' positive emotions decreased and negative emotions increased significantly. Results also showed that the students experienced the following challenges during emergency online learning: not benefiting from online classes, lack of motivation in following online classes, problems related to family life and finances, increased levels of homework, and problems related to Internet access. In terms of positive experiences, students indicated spending more quality time with family, time for hobbies and personal development, examining life and personal existence, increase in the level of academic development due to homework assignments, and increase in grade-point-average. Students' answers also revealed that their instructors may have been going through some difficulties as well. Students highlighted complaints related to their instructors' lack of interest in teaching, not holding lectures, or not uploading class notes or slides, and their difficulty in getting in touch with their instructors. Implications are discussed.

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Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic, which started in the first quarter of 2020 and continues presently, has affected education globally (Dhawan, 2020). Educational institutions around the world had to rearrange

their academic calendars and education methods (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). This rearrangement has also entailed a transition to online learning in higher educational institutions in terms of learning methods (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). This transition has manifested as an abandonment of traditional learning methods in the classroom and a focus of faculty members on the transition to online education in a short period of time (UNESCO, 2020). Academic institutions have also started to consider factors in the adoption of online learning methods, as well as educational quality (Liguori & Winkler, 2020).

Before the pandemic, many higher education institutions that offered online education had a supportive infrastructure for learners and teachers, but during the pandemic, all institutions had to implement something called emergency online learning (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). The institutions with limited technological infrastructure or knowledge faced challenges as they tried to deliver high-quality education (Crawford et al., 2020). As the literature indicates, delivery of effective online education requires planning and a consideration of the needs of different entities (e.g., students, instructors, administrators, etc.) involved in the process (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Muller, Goh, Lim, & Gao, 2021).

Online learning is defined as learning activities carried out in online environments through the use of various devices with Internet access (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Rapid developments in technology have increased diverse methods of the delivery of education, which also led to the use of different terminology to describe these methods (McBrien, 2009; Singh & Thurman, 2019). Some of these terms that are also used in this article are online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-aided learning, and blended learning (Cojocariu, Lazar, Nedef, & Lazar, 2014). The two common characteristics of all of these terms are having an electronic device to access online content and participating in online learning from any physical place (Cojocariu et al., 2014).

Online teaching can be delivered through synchronous learning environments or asynchronous learning environments. Littlefield (2018) defines synchronous learning as the participation and interaction of students and teachers in live courses where this interaction results in real-time communication and feedback. In defining asynchronous learning, on the other hand, Littlefield (2018) states that this type of learning does not include live interaction as course content is accessed at different times based on the student's availability. Littlefield (2008) also explains the advantages of synchronous learning as providing an opportunity for social and academic interaction among the instructor and the students, ensuring that students participate in the course interactively, and making it possible to return to in-person courses once it is safe to do so. The disadvantages of synchronous learning, however, are that it requires having Internet access to online platforms, having knowledge of how to use these platforms, and having a computer and/or mobile phone to access live lectures (Basilaia, Dgebuadze, Kantaria, & Chokhonelidze, 2020).

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, education stakeholders (students, academic personnel, etc.) are required to consider various factors such as emotions and thoughts, technological infrastructure, presentation of the course curriculum, and measurement and assessment to adapt to this mandatory transformation period in higher education (Chick et al., 2020). Among these factors, it is emphasized that students' perceptions about online learning are important to ensure their adaptation to the process and increase their efficiency (Song, Singleton, Hill, & Koh, 2004). Problems like the lack of social interaction in the learning process, theoretical course content not allowing for functional practice, and structuring only presentation-oriented course contents cause negative perceptions about online learning (Song et al., 2004). Complexity, lack of information, and the unexpected beginning of the transition to online education may particularly bring about feelings such as disappointment and failure.

Young et al. (2021) analyzed the emotional experiences and coping strategies between younger and older adults during the pandemic. The authors found that older adults showed a greater perception of vulnerability, but younger adults experienced more stress and negative affect in response to the pandemic. Similarly, the literature indicates that the pandemic had a negative effect on young adults. Zhang and Ma (2020) found that the pandemic had a mild stressful impact on adults' lives. More than half of the participants in their study felt horrified and apprehensive, but they did not feel helpless, probably because they were with family members and had more time to rest and relax. Kazmi, Hasan, Talib, and Saxena (2020) explored the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adults between 15 and 50 years old. Their study found that young adults between 21 years to 25 years showed the highest levels of stress and anxiety compared to the other age groups. Other studies in the literature indicate that college students experienced distress due to the uncertainty and abrupt transition to online learning. Many students had to cease their internships and/or delay graduation (Zhai & Du, 2020). In one particular study, Denisov, Petrenko, Koretskaya, and Bencic (2021) compared the levels of anxiety and depression of higher education students in Russia and Turkey. Both groups had similar levels of anxiety and depression at the beginning of the pandemic, but in November 2020, Turkey enforced more restrictive rules (e.g., schedules for going outside based on age, curfew, etc.). The authors collected a second set of data in December 2020 and found that Turkish students had a significant increase of depression and anxiety compared with Russian students after the COVID-19 restrictions became stricter. This study made it clear that the pandemic and the governmental measures had a negative effect on students' mental health.

The emotional state of learners while pursuing online learning affects their learning outcomes (Pekrun, 2014; Yu, Huang, Han, & Li, 2020). Students experience emotions (while learning), or they bring them from life outside school. These emotions can be positive or negative and vary in intensity and frequency. Both positive and negative emotions influence learning by affecting students' attention, motivation, metacognition, and self-regulation (Yu et al., 2020). Positive emotions are those experienced as pleasant such as enjoyment, satisfaction, hope, sense of belongingness, and feelings of competency. Positive emotions enhance flexible thought, increase motivation, and positively appraise one's competence. Sense of belongingness is associated with social connectedness: an individual's opinion of self in relation to others. Social connectedness also plays a positive role in developing confidence and higher-order thinking skills among university students (Sultan, Hussain, & Fatima, 2020). Yu et al. (2020) found that, in the online learning environment, social connectedness increases the students' willingness to complete learning objectives and tasks (learning persistence) and decreases students' anxiety. Similarly, Sultan et al. (2020) found that the use of the internet for learning purposes increases students' social connectedness and life satisfaction. Both, use of the internet and social connectedness, were positively connected with learning achievements.

Conversely, intense and/or frequent negative emotions obstruct students' learning. Negative emotions such as anxiety, stress, shame, apathy, or boredom are perceived as unpleasant. Experiencing these emotions reduces interest, attention, and the use of learning strategies in both face-to-face (Pekrun, 2014) and online learning (Engelmann & Bannert, 2019; Yu et al., 2020). Experiences of low control about online learning can decrease students' positive emotions and lower their motivation for completing online academic qualifications. Furthermore, anxiety has a negative association (Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019). Therefore, it is important to analyze students' emotional states because they might affect students' learning and cognitive processes (Engelmann & Bannert, 2019; Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019).

The literature indicates that there was a different set of international responses to COVID-19. China, which reported the first case of COVID-19, is considered a country that has had a short time to prepare for online higher education (Qu, 2020). In Germany, for example, Crawford et al. (2020) stated that similar to

many other countries, each university first acted on its own to figure out how to respond to the outbreak. One German university suspended residential education in March, with a decision to return to residential education toward the end of April 2020. However, the German government's ban on social contact at a later time forced all higher education institutions to act in a more uniform way. Previous experience with SARS in Hong Kong and previous experience with MERS in South Korea, on the other hand, helped universities in these places to quickly respond to COVID-19 and know what steps to implement for a smoother transition to emergency online learning (Crawford et al., 2020). In Georgia, the higher education system, which was face-to-face, was challenged when, from March 2nd of 2020, the education process was suspended in universities and schools countrywide due to the spread of COVID-19 at the recommendation of the National Center of Disease Control of Georgia (Basilaia et al., 2020). Countries and institutions that had a better technological infrastructure also responded more effectively to the outbreak and experienced a relatively smooth transition to emergency online learning (Crawford et al., 2020).

Following global trends, the universities of Turkey also started to rapidly apply online education. Previously, 123 out of 207 universities had Distance Education Application and Research Centers (UZEM) and had experience in distance education. These universities continued their education via a complete distance education. However, many others started to provide distance education with only 3 weeks of preparation (Tosun, 2021). The Council of Higher Education in Turkey announced its first resolution on distance education on March 18, 2020. In this resolution, which was presented as a road map for distance education, distance education was structured in terms of regulation, infrastructure, human resources, content, and implementation. It was specified that universities would be able to use synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods in practice. Undergraduate and associate degree programs were asked to particularly focus on asynchronous practices depending on the difficulties that arise in the process (Higher Education Council [YÖK], 2020).

In Turkey, different studies analyzed the experiences of teachers and administrators of K-12 public schools during the transition to emergency online learning (Albiser et al., 2020; Çilek, Uçan, & Ermiş, 2021; Han, Demirbilek, Demirtaş, 2021). Regarding higher education, Tuson (2021) presented an analysis of the problems and solutions that the Turkish universities faced during the transition to online learning. Karadag (2021) analyzed how the pandemic affected grade inflation in higher education and found that during the pandemic, students received higher grades than before. Güven and Uçar (2021) evaluated the opinions of students at a college of education who were taking an internship course and completing their pre-service internship training at a K-12 school. The results of their study showed that these pre-service interns perceived emergency online learning as having deficiencies in terms of communication and they were concerned that emergency online learning was not preparing them enough for the real world. They, however, found their college instructors to be competent in this process. In another study, Kahya (2021) analyzed the students' acceptance or rejection of the emergency online learning. However, to the extent of our knowledge, there are no studies that explored the students' experiences and emotional states in Turkey during the transition to emergency online learning due to the pandemic. In the literature, there are studies about the students' experiences and challenges during the transition to online learning, but the results vary depending on the country or the students' particular circumstances. Trout (2020) examined the perception of the transition among ninety-two U.S. college students who have not taken online courses in the past. In Trout's study, students reported a decline in motivation due to the absence of in-person interaction with peers and instructors. However, the willingness to take courses in the future depended on their experience during the pandemic. Students who perceived that online classes were effective and increased their schedule flexibility were more likely to take future online courses.

Students' experiences vary based on the country and the accessibility to technology. Lassoued, Alhendawi, and Bashitialshaaer (2020) explored the students' experiences in distance learning during COVID-19, but they focused on a few Arab universities and their respective countries. They found that the major obstacle to achieving quality distance learning was the lack of capabilities to communicate remotely (devices, internet, apps), problems with the internet flow (speed), and students' difficulty understanding some subjects due to the absence of classroom interaction. Similarly, Adnan and Anwar (2020) conducted research to review the opinions of university students studying in Pakistan on the transition to online education during the COVID-19 outbreak. The results showed that online learning was challenging for students due to lack of access to the internet, ineffective technology, and difficulty of interaction (contact between students and professors). Adnan and Anwar (2020) concluded that online learning may not be effective for "underdeveloped countries like Pakistan" (p. 49), because of difficulty accessing the internet.

Emergency online learning created unique circumstances. The process of the transition to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic has affected university administrators, students, and academics at different levels (Toquero, 2020; Tosun, 2021). Therefore, it is emphasized that academic institutions should determine and evaluate the needs and thoughts of all parties involved in this transition process. Among these parties, students are the ones who are affected the most. The current research study is a follow-up analysis of an international research project aimed to determine the students' use and acceptance of online education during the transition period of the COVID-19 pandemic (Aguilera-Hermida et al., 2021). The current study aimed to explore the experiences of Turkish students during COVID-19, the specific challenges that they faced, and how students' positive and negative emotional states changed. We defined positive emotional states as life satisfaction, happiness, feeling competent, and social connectedness. We defined negative emotional states as anxiety, stress, and apathy. Therefore, our research questions were (1) what were the challenges and positive aspects that the Turkish college students experienced while studying online due to COVID-19, and (2) did students perceive changes in their emotional states?

Method

Research Design

This was a cross-sectional quantitative study with a qualitative component. The study analyzed the experiences of Turkish students while studying in emergency online learning due to COVID-19. A questionnaire asked students to indicate their experiences related to different variables.

Participants

Participants of this research study consisted of 125 undergraduate students studying in Turkey, recruited using convenience and snowball sampling methods. Seventy-eight students were from one university located Ankara where one of the authors is a lecturer, and 47 students were from 29 other universities around the country. Students were enrolled in the departments of the faculties of education, science and letters, engineering, health sciences, economics, administrative sciences, and law. The sample included 108 (86.4%) women and 17 (13.6%) men. Students' ages ranged from 19 to 26 years, and 88.8% of the students were living with their families during the COVID-19 outbreak. Among the students participating in the research, 20.8% were in their first year of the degree program, 44% in the second year, 28.8% in the third year, and 6.4% in the fourth year.

Data Collection Instruments

Online Questionnaire (Self-Report) – Data were collected using Google forms during Fall 2020, when Turkish students were receiving education completely online. The questionnaire was developed by the

first author to capture the students' experiences with online learning during the emergency online learning due to COVID-19. Answers were based on students' perceptions (self-report). The online survey asked students about activities, attitudes, emotions, and their educational experience after they transitioned to emergency online learning. The questionnaire had the informed consent on the first screen/page and indicated that the study was exploring college students' perceptions about how COVID-19 government measures (stay-at-home orders and/or physical distance) and remote learning has affected their learning process. It included demographic information such as the year of study, sex, age, department of study, university, and the students' living situation.

Information about the variables related to positive emotions (life satisfaction, happiness, feeling competent, social connectedness) and negative emotions (stress, anxiety, apathy) was also gathered through this questionnaire. The instructions said, "Describe how your emotional states have changed after the stay-at-home period related to Covid-19 " and each emotional state was listed with a brief description (e.g., feeling competent – able to do things; anxiety – feeling of apprehension, uneasiness). Students were asked to indicate the change that they experienced for each of them based on a 5-point scale: (1) decreased significantly, (2) decreased slightly, (3) no change, (4) increased slightly, and (5) increased significantly. Students were not asked about their emotional states before the COVID-19 outbreak. They were asked about their perception of change related to their emotions after COVID-19 happened. Therefore, no change (3) was considered neutral.

In addition, there were two open-ended questions in the questionnaire which made up the qualitative component of the study. These questions were as follows: "Please explain the difficulties you experienced related to your online education during the COVID-19 outbreak" and "What are the positive aspects of the online education process you started due to the COVID-19 outbreak?"

The questionnaires were answered anonymously. Students could stop participating in the study at any time. No monetary rewards were given for completing the questionnaire.

Data Collection Process

Permission from the Ethics Commission of a large public university was received before starting to collect the data. An email was sent through a listserv to invite students to participate in the survey. The link to the online questionnaire was included in this email. Furthermore, we asked the students to send the information about the study and the link to the survey to other students that they knew. Once a participant clicked on the link to access the online survey, they were first presented with a consent form. After they read the form and agreed to participate in the study, next they were shown the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

For the quantitative portion of the study, statistical analyses were performed using SPSS to analyze the data. Means, standard deviations, and frequencies (percentages) were calculated for each variable. Moreover, the means were compared using a *t*-test and number 3 (no change) to observe if the level of variables related to positive emotions and negative emotions increased or decreased. Even though we had a strong Cronbach's Alpha for both constructs (positive emotions, .84; negative emotions, .86), we considered it more helpful to analyze the items individually. One student was not included in some of the analyses because the participant did not answer the majority of questions but answered the open-ended questions and items related to the demographics.

For the qualitative the data, we used content analysis and used codes to review facts from the text, and then presented the findings in the form of frequency of key categories or themes (Bengtsson, 2016). More specifically, the answers from the two open-ended questions were analyzed manually with the use

of Excel (Microsoft Office). Codes for data were created and analyzed. Four stages were followed: 1) encoding data, 2) finding themes, 3) arranging codes and categories, and 4) identifying and interpreting findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Answers were encoded by two researchers; then codes and categories were collected and arranged by the same researchers. Statements were counted, and then frequency was obtained. As an additional step, the data were triangulated to ensure trustworthiness. The third researcher reviewed the categories and codes against the original data to confirm the validity of the analysis (Long & Johnson, 2000).

Results

Changes to the Emotional States

All of the results were significant when the positive and negative emotions were compared with the value 3 (no change). Students' responses showed that life satisfaction, happiness, feeling competent, and being socially connected significantly decreased while learning online due to COVID-19. On the contrary, negative emotions that were expressed as stress, anxiety, and apathy increased significantly (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Emotions Compared with Neutral (3)*

Item	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	
Life satisfaction	124	2.49	1.26	-4.49	**
Happiness	124	2.24	1.15	-7.34	**
Feeling competent	124	2.75	1.40	-1.99	**
Socially connected	124	1.79	1.00	-13.49	**
Stress	124	4.12	1.20	10.40	**
Anxiety	124	4.10	1.12	10.94	**
Apathy	122	3.74	1.24	6.50	**

*Significant at the $p < .05$ level, ** Significant at the $p < .001$ level

As mentioned before, during COVID-19, people had to stay at home and reduce social contact as much as possible. Many students expressed that the feeling of being socially connected decreased significantly ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 1$, $t = 13.49$, $p < .001$). This item was so important that we analyzed the correlation between being socially connected and the other items through Spearman correlation analyses. Being socially connected showed a moderate positive correlation with life satisfaction ($M = 2.49$, $r_s = .47$, $p < .001$), happiness ($M = 2.24$, $r_s = .50$, $p < .001$), and feeling competent ($M = 2.75$, $r_s = .40$, $p < .001$).

Social connectedness showed a low negative significant correlation with stress ($M = 4.12$, $r_s = -.19$, $p < .05$) and anxiety ($M = 4.10$, $r_s = -.20$, $p < .05$), but not with apathy. The lack of social interaction not only had a role in the feeling of connection with others, but also the students' emotions. There was a negative moderate relation between the constructs of positive and negative emotions ($r_s = -.37$, $p < .001$). This is very relevant because all positive emotions decreased and negative emotions increased significantly.

Difficulties and Positive Aspects Related to COVID-19

We analyzed students' responses to the open-ended questions about the difficulties and positive aspects they experienced while studying online during the COVID-19 concerning their emergency online learning. We looked at the challenges and positive aspects and reported the frequency, so we can see the most prominent challenges and positive aspects.

Among the 125 students, nine students indicated not having any difficulties, but the rest did. The five most common themes based on the students' responses were 1) not being able to benefit from online

classes, 2) a lack of motivation in following online classes, 3) observations related to the academic personnel, 4) problems related to family life and finances, and 5) increased homework assignments. The coded categories with examples of the students' statements are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Difficulties Students Faced*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Sample statements from the participants</i>
Not being able to benefit from classes	34	27.2	"Since I study in the department of social services, face-to-face education is much more beneficial to us. In this way, I think we cannot understand the basics of courses completely. So, I think online education will not be good for us".
Lack of motivation in following classes	31	24.8	"I could not be as serious about my courses in online education as in face-to-face education. I felt like I wasn't a student anymore. I ignored my courses and did not take them seriously".
Observations related to the academic personnel	22	17.6	"Instructors' lack of attention to their courses"; "Some teachers did not hold class meetings"; "Difficulty in reaching instructors";
Problems related to family life and finances	19	15.2	"Problems related to family life increased and financial income decreased"
Increased homework assignments	15	12	"Class meetings are not productive, and instructors are not so attentive; courses have become much more difficult with the increased level of homework assignments".
Difficulties in communicating with instructors	12	9.6	"We had difficulty with getting in touch with the academic personnel".
Problems related to having more asynchronized classes and fewer synchronized classes	12	9.6	"Even though the instructors did not hold synchronized class meetings for each class and I ended up getting better grades because the learning assessment was based on class notes the instructor uploaded, the foundational knowledge I needed to establish as a first-year student could not be accomplished".
Time management problems	12	9.6	"Not being able to manage the time in terms of participation in online classes".
None	9	7.2	"None"
Difficulties related to synchronized class meetings as a result of the student not having access to a computer or to a private room	9	7.2	"I have a younger sibling and I do not have my own room, so I had difficulty in focusing and studying".

The second open-ended question aimed to determine what types of positive experiences students may have had as a result of the emergency online learning they had started. Four students did not answer the question. It is important to emphasize that 20 students (16%) answered that there were no positive aspects of the online education process, and this response was the third highest in terms of frequency. Among the other most common themes were: 1) the opportunity to create time for hobbies and personal development, 2) an increase in the level of academic development due to homework assignments, 3) an

increase in grade-point-average (GPA), 4) an increase in quality of time with family, and 5) examining life and personal existence. In Table 3, we list all categories and frequencies in order.

Table 3. *Positive Aspects of the Online Education Process*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Sample statements from the participants</i>
Opportunity to create time for hobbies and personal development	28	22.4	"I learned to do yoga. I read more and focused on my hobbies"
Increase in the level of academic development due to homework assignments	20	16	"I accomplished a deeper level of knowledge related to different subjects by doing homework on a regular basis".
None	20	16	"No positive aspects" "There's not a single situation that I've experienced in a positive way, but on the contrary, I feel completely alienated from life".
Increase in grade-point-average (GPA)	16	12.8	"My average academic score increased thanks to assignment-weighted courses".
Spending more quality time with family	16	12.8	"Our family bonds strengthened".
Examining life and personal existence	15	12	"I started to think about the meaning of life and my place in the world".
Development of competence in time management	14	11.2	"I learned how to be organized".

Discussion

This research study asked a group of Turkish university students to share how their emotional states changed during COVID-19 as they transitioned to emergency online learning. Students were also asked to indicate the difficulties they experienced and the positive aspects of the online education process they started during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The quantitative results showed that the students' emotions were affected. Similar to what other researchers have found (e.g., Denisov, et al., 2021), the pandemic had a strong effect on the emotional state of the Turkish students. In this study, positive emotions decreased, and negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and apathy increased. As shown by the qualitative responses from the students, there are many reasons that may have influenced the increase of students' negative emotions. As one study by Kılınçel, Kılınçel, Muratdağı, Aydın, and Usta (2021) showed, anxiety among adolescents in Turkey increased during the pandemic. The main reasons associated were having a COVID-positive patient in the vicinity or having previous mental health issues. The authors also found a positive correlation between loneliness and anxiety. This indicates that the pandemic itself represents a stressor that has to be considered as a part of the educational process.

We found that the level of social connectedness decreased the most among the positive emotions. Sense of connectedness reflects emotional connection and is a subdimension of sense of community. Connectedness is highly contingent on face-to-face contact and is a central human need (Landmann & Rohmann, 2021). The results of this study show that contact restrictions, such as those adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, contributed to a decrease in the feeling of being socially connected in Turkish

students. This is similar to a study developed in Germany where the researchers found that feeling connected positively predicted psychological well-being and negatively predicted perceived stress (Landmann & Rohmann, 2021). The decrease in social connectedness is associated with students' lowered levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and feeling competent.

Our study also identified that students' level of social connectedness was positively correlated with happiness, life satisfaction, and feeling competent. The students who had higher levels of social connectedness also had higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and feeling competent. Social connectedness is relevant for the overall wellbeing of students.

Sense of connectedness may vary depending on the type of group with whom people maintain contact, with family being the most important one (Landmann & Rohmann, 2021). But we should not assume that students' level of social connectedness will not be affected if they have continuous contact with their family members. Because, as the findings showed, the students reported enjoying their family life, but their level of feeling of being socially connected still went down.

Related to the qualitative portion, this study showed students believing that the experiential learning they were accomplishing in a classroom setting was missing from online education. They were concerned that the foundational knowledge/experience they needed to succeed in their career may be missing. Students also found themselves not taking their online classes as seriously as they did their face-to-face classes. This finding is in line with previous research developed in Turkey where students found emergency online learning to be inadequate (Güven & Uçar, 2021). The transition from the face-to-face education process to the online education process may bring about cognitive difficulties and this may affect students' motivation toward learning (Bower, 2019). In addition, as Heckel and Ringeisen (2019) state, high anxiety is a factor affecting motivation and success. As the data indicated, students in our study experienced more anxiety due to COVID-19 and this anxiety, in turn, may have affected their level of motivation in following their online classes.

Students emphasized their complaints related to their instructors' lack of interest in teaching, instructors not holding lectures or uploading class notes or slides, and difficulties in getting in touch with their instructors. This indicates that, similar to students, instructors may have also been negatively affected by COVID-19. This finding is in line with a previous research study (Flaherty, 2020) that identified that instructors experienced anxiety at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak which later turned into chronic stress. The same study identified that while dealing with the challenges of emergency online learning, many professors had a lack of knowledge related to online technologies and online teaching, felt incompetent, and experienced burnout and financial difficulties and challenges related to childcare. As Tosun (2020) stated, the rapid transition to emergency online learning may have negative effects on faculty members and students.

Results also identified that students suffered from problems related to family life and finances. They stated that due to COVID-19, their income decreased. In addition, they needed to attend to the chores at home, which took time away from studying. The presence of guests and small children caused noise. All these challenges may have negatively affected students' learning. The instructors may need to be informed about these new difficulties students face as they are trying to navigate their learning in a challenging environment and financial situation so that these instructors could respond to these students in a more holistic way rather than only from a teaching focus.

Regarding homework and grades, the qualitative results showed that some students complained about having to face an increased amount of homework assignments when they transitioned into emergency online learning. It is possible that the instructors may have relied on an increased level of homework to promote learning. But other students considered among the positive experiences an increase in the level of academic development due to homework assignments and an increase in grade-point-average (GPA). Some students enjoyed completing more homework as it led to regular studying and learning the relevant

knowledge at a deeper level. Because the grading was changed from being exam-based to assignment-based during COVID-19, some students found it easier to get higher grades in their courses. This is an important factor that requires more research. Karadag (2021) analyzed the effects of COVID-19 on grades and, compared with a year ago, there was a 41% increase in the highest grade (AA) in Turkey. The author mentioned that instructors may have tried to compensate (lenient grading) for the negative circumstances experienced by the sudden switch to emergency online learning. This would explain why students were not satisfied with the level of knowledge acquired even though they reported an increase in their GPA.

Students also expressed difficulty related to accessing the internet and a computer. These experiences were likely mentioned by the students whose household could not afford a separate computer for each student or subscribe to an internet service that could support several electronic devices at the same time. This particular finding is in line with previous research which also identified that students in Turkey (Han et al., 2021) and in different parts of the world experienced difficulty having access to a computer device and accessing the Internet due to socioeconomic conditions (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Zhong, 2020). Particularly in Turkey, The Council of Higher Education encouraged universities to offer open access to digital course content and, while all universities transitioned to emergency online learning, not all of them had the same resources to support students and faculty members (Tosun, 2021). So, how could these students be helped? One university we know, for example, lent a laptop to students in need and expanded the Wi-Fi connection to the parking lots on campus for students to use. Similar solutions could be utilized by institutions and local agencies to facilitate the learning process for students in need. Furthermore, it is important to continue analyzing students' experiences during the pandemic and after the pandemic. The Council of Higher Education should continue supporting universities so knowledge can be accessible to everyone.

When COVID-19 is under control and the restrictions are lifted, it is likely that online education will continue. In addition, having experienced the level of online education and seeing endless online teaching possibilities, we could assume that there will be more online education after this particular pandemic compared to the level of online education before the pandemic. Therefore, education stakeholders need to pay close attention to technological accessibility and the physical learning environment so that students' learning could be facilitated in the best way possible.

Besides the problems mentioned above and the decrease in their level of positive emotions, our results also showed that some positive experiences came from the COVID-19 outbreak and emergency online learning. Students mentioned the most common positive experiences as having the opportunity to create time for hobbies and personal development, increase in quality time with family, and an examination of life and personal existence. It may be that living under the COVID-19 restrictions helped students have the extra time to reflect on their lives. They also took advantage of this extra time to learn new activities, such as yoga, and engage more in their hobbies. It also seems like the COVID-19 conditions helped strengthen the family bonds for some students. Some students were able to see that good things could also come from unfortunate situations. A sign of resilience is to be able to survive in a stressful/unexpected situation by being able to adapt to change and focus on the positive things in a person's life.

Conversely, some students were not able to find any positive experiences to share. In addition, as an answer to the item about the positive aspects of the COVID-19 process and the emergency online learning, some students wrote more negative aspects that they were experiencing. This result may be related to students' mental health. As we found in the study, the pandemic increased students' levels of stress and anxiety. These students may have felt overwhelmed with these negative emotions and not be able to see any positive aspects of the COVID-19 process as the other students did. The pandemic has had a strong impact on students' emotions (Denisov et al., 2021).

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings in this study, there are additional implications and recommendations the higher education institutions should consider. As Filius et al. (2019) posit, an effective online education is complex and goes beyond simply showing PowerPoint slides or giving assignments. Utilizing and including other types of instructional methods, such as oral interaction between the students through audio peer feedback or videotape of a short lecture, could provide the students with a sense of community, increase interaction time among the professors and the students, and increase students' level of social connectedness.

Furthermore, it is important that instructors seek periodic feedback from their students related to their course and make modifications accordingly so that the students' feelings of being overwhelmed could be decreased while, at the same time, ensuring that the targeted level of learning is reached, and a fair grade is obtained. Professors can promote students' enjoyment and excitement with different approaches such as creating an art piece or a unique product that can be used to fulfill the teaching and educational needs in their own settings. Also, depending on the preference and access of the individuals involved, different options such as the use of 'TikTok' for short videos, use of a smartphone, or a voice recording are among these options. Versatility will promote interaction even during the use of an online environment.

Higher education institutions need to particularly pay attention to online programming to increase the level of social connectedness. This programming might help students with other positive emotions, which, as the literature mentioned (e.g., Engelmann & Bannert, 2019; Heckel & Ringeisen, 2019), could help with a better learning process.

Limitations and Future Research

While our study presents important findings, these findings should be interpreted in light of its limitations. Due to the sampling method we used (majority of students from one university), and the self-report questionnaire, the generalizability of our results is limited. Furthermore, this study focused on the perception of change in the students' emotions. Therefore, there was not an objective measure that can compare emotions before the pandemic and during or after. In addition, the sample came only from Turkey. Therefore, the results should be interpreted cautiously when applying the findings to other countries. Future research could examine how online learning has transformed as a result of the current pandemic and in what ways online learning will continue to exist after the pandemic is over. Future studies could also examine how the number of online learning activities could be increased to facilitate more social interaction among the students, which then might increase students' level of social connectedness.

Conclusion

Different countries had different experiences during the COVID-19 emergency online learning transition based on access to technology, previous experience with online learning, and the major of study students might be pursuing. Emergency online learning was especially difficult for countries like Turkey who did not have much experience and infrastructure related to online education. Emphasizing that emotional states will have an impact on the learning process, we invite instructors and students to approach online learning and teaching as a fun exploration of different options that create a culture that raises students' confidence, promotes positive emotions, and encourage social interaction. As Sultan et al., (2020) mentioned, student-student online interaction is the strongest predictor of feeling socially connected.

Individual circumstances need to be considered in the creation of teaching/learning methods that would address the unique needs of institutions, depending on the country and the students, including becoming aware of the changes in emotional states that they may experience. We are recommending that institutions design online teaching to be inclusive of especially disadvantaged groups. When that is the

case, then, every student will end up benefiting from online education and may feel more socially connected.

The COVID-19 process has shown college institutions that teaching/learning can be handled in many different ways. Even if the pandemic is under control and we go back to fully residential learning, online technologies will continue to be used to supplement residential teaching. So, continued faculty training is a must.

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COVID-19 Salgını, Türkiye'deki Üniversite Öğrencileri ve Acil Durumda Çevrim içi Öğrenme

Giriş

COVID-19 salgını, eğitim sistemini küresel düzeyde derinden etkilemiştir. Tüm eğitim kademelerinde yüz yüze eğitim yöntemi askıya alınarak kısa sürede çevrim içi eğitime farklı yöntemlerden yararlanılarak geçiş yapılmak zorunda kalınmıştır (Dhawan, 2020). Rieley (2020), diğer eğitim kademelerinde olduğu gibi yükseköğretimde de kısa sürede geçiş yapılan çevrim içi eğitim sürecinin ortaya çıkabilecek olumsuz sonuçlarını en aza indirmek için yükseköğretim kurumlarının etkili akademik politikalar üretmelerinin gerekliliğine işaret etmektedir. Çevrim içi öğrenme, internet erişimi olan çeşitli cihazların kullanılmasıyla çevrim içi ortamlarda gerçekleştirilen öğrenme etkinlikleri olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Çevrim içi eğitimde iki temel nokta, çevrim içi içeriğe erişmek için elektronik bir cihaza sahip olmak ve herhangi bir fiziksel bir mekandan çevrim içi öğrenmeye katılmaktır (Cojocariu, Lazar, Nedef ve Lazar, 2014). Çevrim içi öğrenme, eş zamanlı (senkron) öğrenme veya eş zamansız (asenkron) öğrenme aracılığıyla sağlanabilir. Littlefield (2018), eş zamanlı öğrenmeyi, derslere öğrenci ve öğretim elemanlarının eş zamanlı katıldığı ve buna bağlı olarak da eş zamanlı iletişim ve geri bildirimin gerçekleştiği çevrim içi öğrenme şekli olarak tanımlamaktadır. Diğer taraftan eş zamansız öğrenme, eş zamanlı etkileşimi içermediği, ders içeriklerine öğrencilerin kendilerinin belirlediği zamanlarda erişebildiği çevrim içi eğitim şekli olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Littlefield, 2018).

COVID-19 salgını nedeniyle, eğitim paydaşlarının (öğrenciler, akademik personel, vb.) yaşadığı bu zorunlu değişime uyum sağlamalarını kolaylaştırmak için tüm paydaşların duygu, düşünce ve algıları, teknolojik altyapı ve bu alt yapıya ulaşım, öğretim programı, ölçme ve değerlendirme gibi faktörlerin ele alınması gerekliliği vurgulanmaktadır (Chick ve diğ., 2020). Bu faktörler arasında öğrencilerin çevrim içi öğrenmeye yönelik algılarının belirlenmesinin etkili bir çevrim içi eğitim sisteminin yapılandırılmasında en önemli faktörlerden biri olarak görülmektedir (Song, Singleton, Hill ve Koh, 2004).

Türkiye’de de dünyada birçok ülkede olduğu gibi COVID-19 salgınıyla birlikte yükseköğretimde hızlı bir şekilde çevrim içi eğitime geçiş yapılmak zorunda kalınmıştır. Yükseköğretim Kurulu, 18 Mart 2020’de uzaktan eğitime ilişkin ilk kararını açıklamıştır. Uzaktan eğitime ilişkin yol haritası olarak sunulan bu kararda üniversitelerin mevcut alt yapılarına bağlı olarak eş zamanlı ve eş zamansız çevrim içi eğitim yöntemlerini kullanabilecekleri ifade edilmiştir (Yükseköğretim Kurulu , 2020).

Sonuç olarak COVID-19 salgını sırasında çevrim içi eğitime geçiş süreci üniversite yöneticilerini, öğrencileri ve öğretim elemanlarını farklı düzeylerde etkilemektedir (Toquero, 2020). Bu nedenle akademik kurumların bu geçiş sürecine dahil olan tüm tarafların ihtiyaç ve düşüncelerini belirlemesi ve değerlendirmesi gerektiği önemli görülmektedir. Bu araştırmada da buna bağlı olarak Türkiye’de öğrenim gören lisans öğrencilerinin COVID-19 salgınıyla birlikte geçiş yaptıkları çevrim içi eğitime ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu çalışmada, çevrim içi eğitim almaya başlayan lisans öğrencilerinin bu süreçle ilgili deneyimlerini ve duygu durumlarındaki değişikliği belirlemek amacıyla nicel ve nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları, Türkiye'deki 31 üniversitede farklı fakülte ve bölümlerde öğrenim gören 125 lisans öğrencisinden oluşmuştur. Katılımcılara araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda iki açık uçlu soru sorulmuştur. Ayrıca da yedi ayrı alanla ilgili duygu durumlarının nasıl değiştiğini belirtmeleri istenmiştir. Pozitif duygu durumları yaşam memnuniyeti, mutluluk, kendini yetkin hissetmek ve sosyal bağlılıktan oluşmuştur. Negatif duygu durumları stres, anksiyete ve ilgisizlik olarak belirlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin, yaş, üniversite, sınıf, bölüm, fakülte ve yaşadıkları yeri belirlemeye yönelik kişisel bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Veri toplamaya başlamadan önce etik komisyon izni alınmış ardından çevrim içi platformda öğrenciler açık uçlu soruları yanıtlamışlardır. Açık uçlu sorulardan elde edilen veriler bilgisayara aktarıldıktan sonra kodlar ve kategoriler belirlenmiştir. İki araştırmacı tarafından elde edilen kod ve kategoriler karşılaştırılarak veriler düzenlenmiştir.

Bulgular

Öğrencilerin, COVID-19 sürecinde çevrim içi eğitim süreçleriyle ilgili olarak yaşadıkları zorluklarla ilgili açık soruya verdikleri yanıtları incelendiğinde 15 kategori bulunmuştur. İlk beş kategori; 1) Çevrim içi derslerden yararlanamama, 2) Çevrim içi derslerde motivasyon eksikliği, 3) COVID-19 salgından etkilenen akademik personelle ilgili gözlemler, 4) Aile yaşamı ve finansmanı ile ilgili sorunlar, 5) Artan ev ödevleri, şeklindedir. Öğrencilerin COVID-19 sürecinde çevrim içi eğitim süreçleriyle ilgili olarak yaşadıkları olumlu deneyimleri belirlemeye yönelik yöneltilen açık soruya verdikleri yanıtlar incelendiğinde ise 13 kategori bulunmuştur. İlk beş kategori olarak 1) Hobiler ve kişisel gelişim için zaman yaratma fırsatı, 2) Ev ödevleri nedeniyle akademik gelişim düzeyinde artış, 3) Not ortalamasında (GPA) artış, 4) Aile ile geçirilen zamanın kalitesinde bir artış ve 5) Yaşamı ve kişisel varoluşu incelemek şeklindedir. Son olarak, istatistiksel analizler öğrencilerin pozitif duygu durumlarının alçaldığını ve negatif duygu durumlarının da yükseldiğini göstermiştir. Öğrenciler, COVID-19 nedeniyle pozitif duygu durumlarının (yaşam memnuniyeti, mutluluk, kendini yetkin hissetmek ve sosyal bağlılık) alçaldığını ve negatif duygu durumlarının (stres, anksiyete ve ilgisizlik) yükseldiğini belirtmiştir.

Tartışma, Sonuç ve Öneriler

Bu araştırmanın sonucunda, öğrencilerin COVID-19 salgınıyla geçiş yaptıkları çevrim içi eğitim ile ilgili yaşadıkları zorluklara ilişkin ilk sırasında çevrim içi derslerden yararlanamama ardından çevrim içi dersleri takip etmede motivasyon eksikliği bulgusu elde edilmiştir. Bir diğer bulgu ise sınıf ortamında gerçekleştirilen eğitim sürecine göre çevrim içi eğitimin yetersiz olduğuna ilişkin görüştür. Çevrim içi derslerin yüz yüze dersler kadar ciddiye alınmadığı tespit edilen bir diğer noktadır. Bu bulgu, yüz yüze eğitim sürecinden çevrim içi eğitim sürecine geçişin bilişsel zorluklara yol açabileceğini ve bunun öğrencilerin öğrenmeye yönelik motivasyonunun olumsuz şekilde etkilenebileceğini gösteren araştırmalarla uyumludur (Bower, 2019).

Duygu durumlarındaki değişikliğe bakıldığında, en çok değişikliğin sosyal bağlılıkla ilgili olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrencileri her dört alandaki pozitif duygu durumlarının alçaldığını belirtmekle birlikte, en fazla sosyal bağlılıkta alçalma olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bu nedenle, yüksek öğrenim kurumları, öğrencilere online ortamda sosyal bağlılık duygusu yaşayabilecekleri farklı programlar sunmalıdır.

Araştırmada elde edilen bir diğer önemli bulgu ise öğretim elemanlarına ilişkindir. Öğretim elemanlarının COVID-19 salgınından muhtemel etkilenmeleri öğrenci ifadeleriyle dolaylı olarak ulaşılabilen bir diğer bulgudur. Öğrenciler zorluklar kapsamında öğretim elemanlarının öğretime yönelik ilgisizliği, ders işlememe, öğretim elemanları ile iletişim kurmada ortaya çıkan sıkıntılar olduğunu ifade etmektedirler. Bu

durum öğrenciler gibi öğretim elemanlarının da COVID-19 sürecinden olumsuz etkilenmiş olabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu bulgu COVID-19 sürecinde öğretim elemanlarının başlangıçta anksiyete olarak ardından kronik stres yaşadıklarını gösteren araştırma bulgularını desteler niteliktedir (Flaherty, 2020). Elde edilen bir başka bulgu, öğrencilerin bu süreçte aile hayatı ve olumsuz ekonomik durumlara bağlı ortaya çıkan zorlanmalardır. COVID-19 nedeniyle ekonomik gelirin azalması gibi stres kaynaklarının öğrencileri olumsuz olarak etkilediği ortaya çıkmıştır. Çevrim içi eğitim sürecinde artan ödev yükü, internet ve bilgisayar kaynaklarına ulaşımında yaşanan zorluklar, gerçekleştirilen benzer çalışma bulgularıyla uyumludur (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Zhong, 2020).

Olumlu deneyimler ise; hobiler ve kişisel gelişim için zaman yaratma fırsatına sahip olma, aileyle geçirilen zaman kalitesinin artması, yaşam ve kişisel varoluşun incelenmesi kategorileri öncelikli kategorilerdir. COVID-19 kısıtlamaları altında yaşamak, öğrencilerin hayatlarını sorgulamak ve açısından etki sağlamış olabilir. Olumlu deneyimler arasında, ev ödevleri nedeniyle akademik gelişim düzeyinde artış ve not ortalamasında (GPA) artış elde edilen diğer bulgulardır. Filius ve ark. (2019), etkili bir çevrim içi eğitimin sadece sunum odaklı değil iç içe geçmiş bir yapıda olduğunu ifade etmektedir. Örneğin sesli ekran geribildirimi, farklı öğretim yöntemlerinden yararlanmak öğrencilere topluluk duygusunu hissettirebilecek iletişim kanallarından yararlanmak önemli görülmektedir. Kısa sürede çevrim içi eğitime geçiş alt yapı ihtiyacını beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu durum Türkiye gibi daha önce benzer deneyim yaşamamış ve alt yapı eksikliği çeken ülkeler açısından zorlanmalı bir durum ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle kurum ve politika yapıcılarının özellikle dezavantajlı grupları kapsayacak şekilde tasarlanması önemli görülmektedir.