HIGHER EDUCATION, AND THE FUTURE OF DISTANCE TEACHING AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMICS; AN INVESTIGATION IN TURKEY

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Abstract

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Purpose - The purpose of this study is to analyze distance education and explore the implications for tourism education from the perspective of academics in the higher education system.
Design - This study was designed as exploratory research in order to measure its effects on the university academics.
Methodology - A questionnaire-based survey was used to collect data. A total of 408 questionnaires from participants were found to be a satisfactory sample. Simple random sampling technique was used by selecting a sample of academics who were teaching distance education in universities in Turkey, of which 228 were from tourism and the rest were from other social science departments.
Findings - The system entails an excessive workload for faculty to provide satisfactory preparation, while some technical problems such as interruptions and disconnections occurred frequently. It was also found that the system is less interactive, does not provide control over students' examination, and it is difficult to keep students interested in active participation. This system was found to be less effective and impractical than traditional on-site instruction in subject areas, especially where hands-on practice is required.
Originality of the research - This study reveals the views of instructors during and immediately after the Covid 19 pandemic, and it is also one of the first studies to examine instructors' opinions on distance education, including suggestions for professionals as their scholarly and applicable contributions.
Keywords Distance Education; Higher Education; Educators; Tourism; Turkey

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INTRODUCTION

Crises compulsorily direct individuals, societies, countries, and governments to take and implement different, faster and more effective and accurate decisions to protect their health conditions and to maintain the balance of daily life. There has been seen a wide variety of unexpected consequences of various crises caused by pandemics. All of the previous pandemics had a narrower scope and a less regional impact (Jamal & Budke, 2020). However, the Covid 19 pandemic became effective on 213 countries (Lu et al., 2020). Consequences of pandemics lead institutions and individuals to use their proactive response capabilities, apart from the routine at the time of crisis. Educational institutions have also started to apply distant education model based on their technological competence, acquired from the past to the present, as a necessity, in order to meet the expectations of the society that they address, without interrupting their basic functions and maintaining the quality of their services since the education system has been one of the most deeply affected sectors by the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide (Dhawan, 2020; Gurukkal, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Linney,2020).

Distance learning or education is not a new phenomenon, it has been practising by the institutions for a long time. For example, in Turkey, Anadolu University has an open university where all the courses are given online, and the system has been continuing for more than 50 years. However, this education program is designed for the students who are obliged to work at the same time and there is no obligation for the students to attend the courses online. Courses are recorded previously and published through online platforms. But during the pandemic, with the imposition of the pandemic restrictions, it became a method that was used entirely. On the other hand, as a consequence of Covid 19, online education had to be a necessity in order to continue the education system and do not loose no more time. For this reason, online or distance education was necessarily practised by all education institutions including universities. Unavoidably, this new system has caused many problems besides some advantages it brings.

In the literature, a number of studies have been identified investigating the effects of distance/online learning on both parties of education systems as instructors and students (Chang et al. 2014; Cigognini et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2010). For instance, papers done by Moore and Kearsley (1996), Linn (1996), Henri (1992), Offir et al. (2008) are some of the previous studies in this area, while some of the recent studies have been done by Sullivan et al. (2017), Debes (2021), Alrawadieh (2022) and Chandra et al. (2022). Additionally, it is seen that there are some studies on distance education focusing on students in the field of tourism. The

papers of Öz (2021), Menemenci-Bahcelerli (2021), Ye &Law (2021) can be listed as just some of them. Tourism education, on the other hand, requires students to gain some satisfactory skills prior to engaged in tourism industry during their education period. As Cooper (2002) stated that in tourism, it is particularly important what the student will be able to do as a result of teaching/learning and how the student arrives at a level of knowledge or skill. As Cooper (2002) emphasized that on the job training or learning by doing approaches should more widely be adopted in this discipline.

Academic education which offers students the opportunity to learn in the classroom environment as a classical way of acquiring knowledge, allowing for live interaction between learners and instructors has changed and was replaced by distance education. So, it can be claimed that all crises force societies for compulsory innovations as well. The institutions have programmed their courses to be either partially or fully online in order to continue uninterrupted education. The creation of a technological infrastructure gives a new direction to the education system. The transformation of software programs into applications that provide cognitive-based learning in an audio-visual format has led to classes being held from places away from the homes of individuals or students or from the classroom-school environment through modern technological devices such as computers and mobile phones connected to the internet.

Though distance learning has compulsorily been instituted due to pandemic conditions, the history of distance education methods dates back to very old times (Bozkurt, 2017). It is known that there were a number of open universities in Europe in the 1960s (Moore, 1973). Other examples were found in the New England Institute of Technology, founded in 1940; The Open University (OU), established in 1969; and Athabasca University, Alberta, Canada, founded in 1970 (Haider & Al-Salman, 2020). In Turkey, it first began with the establishment of Anadolu University in 1982, with distance education being started systematically at the higher education level. Although distance learning was seen as a flexible option in the past, it is obvious that it is a necessity dictated by pandemic conditions. However, shifting from a traditional system permanently to an online teaching-learning model, a lot must be taken into account with the utmost vigilance and care (Linney, 2020).

Distance education can be accepted as an innovation in learning with its specifications differently from the traditional form of teaching. As well known, innovation is defined as the broad application of inventions, ideas and new technologies to the industry (Schaper & Volery, 2007: 75; Hjalager, 2002: 465). Schaper & Volery (2007) divide innovation into two groups; improving existing products and developing completely new products (Schaper & Volery, 2007: 63). However, Schumpeter (1934), Sharpley and Volery (2007: 11) stated that, innovations could have created creative destruction which was defined as the emergence and use of new technologies as a result of innovation, and the disappearance of existing ones from the marketplace. In this line, the restrictions caused by pandemics has made us witnesses to the vital repercussions of the implementation of new technologies broadly to the entire education not only to the tourism education but also diversified disciplines in entire education system of countries and institutions. Chang et al. (2014) underlined that the online environment has let dramatic change to the fundamental nature of the interactions between the teacher, student, and content mean that from physical and interactivity ambiance into virtual. Additionally, some of the authors underline the significance of the impact of new technology on education as "a*lthough online learning will not replace traditional face-to-face delivery, but universities must be prepared for the new reality*" (Njenga & Fourie, 2010). Isaeva et al., (2020) reported that the Covid-19 lockdown period pushed instructors to use this opportunity to excel in their techno-pedagogical skills. Schrager, (2020) states that the Covid-19 pandemic would accelerate higher education institutions' adaption for online learning. Although there are some doubts and fears about the emergence of a new industry as a result of innovation as stated by Abernathy and Clark (1985), these changes should not be destructive nor harmful to the existing system.

The effects of pandemic have led to the use of alternative ways of the education in tourism and other disciplines, and internet/web-based platforms have definitely been one of the most widely used systems all over the world in order to continue the educational services. Thereby, measuring the perceptions about online education of the instructors who use these platforms, deserve to be taken into consideration. For this reason, the primary objective of this study is to find out the consequences of using information communication technologies (ICT) in higher education system in Turkey and the effects of online (distance) education on Turkish academics who perform heavily tourism courses. Herewith, as the purpose of the study, the primary motivation is to explore the general views, technical problems, challenges, advantages, and views on future adaptability based on the experience acquired so far on the part of academics. Therefore, this study aims to explore the views of one of the real users, academics, who experience distance education either synchronous or asynchronous in Turkey. The originality of this study is that it aims broadly and primarily to bring out the considerable concerns of academics who actively used and experienced it, in comparison to the face-to-face teaching in the higher education system of Turkey.

The evaluation of academics as being one party in teaching process would be significantly determinator for the usage of this compulsory innovation in tourism education as well as education in other disciplines. Therefore, we as authors began to try to answer the question "*Could distance education be used instead of traditional face-to-face tourism education in from the view of academics teaching any tourism and tourism related subjects in higher education in Turkey*?", which was also the main research problem need to be investigated, since the uncertainties caused by pandemic and its effects on the society compelled the inclusion of new technologies (ICTs) into the higher education system in Turkey and elsewhere. While switching the learning environment to distance education via online devices and ICTs, a discussion on if this transformation will create a potential for either destructive or constructive innovations in the higher education system as well as in tourism education. It

has been observed that a number of universities in Turkey have switched to the distance learning system as a consequence of Covid19 pandemic. It was also considered that the empirical research findings representing the opinions and concerns of students and instructors on this new learning system and its challenges and potential effects regarding creative destruction need to be investigated. Prior to final decisions being made on the adaptation of distance learning for the higher education system in Turkey, decision-makers ought to be aware of the happenings in the academic environment concerning online education. Thus, this new learning/teaching environment is worth getting an area-specific research findings as a significant field of study. Such research findings leave a lot to be achieved and desired before implementing a final decision on whether to switch the traditional systems to online learning in tourism education and it may give a hint for other disciplines also. Thus, to explore the situation, 3 research questions have been developed as follow;

- What are the perceptions of tourism academics about distance learning?
- What are the challenges and advantages of distance learning from instructors' viewpoint of teaching many courses including tourism?
- Will distance teaching be able to be a new teaching model for educators in the future?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Approaches to Distance Education

Illeris (2003) underlines that learning is a very complex process that involves biological, psychological and societal elements which follow different sets of logic and work together in a complex interaction (Illeris, 2003). Moore (1973) defines learning as a purposeful and deliberate activity by the learner as gaining knowledge or skill through practice or research (Moore, 1973). The adaptation of technology in the learning environment affects the abilities of individuals to acquire knowledge with their various sense organs, to understand it and to create an abstract behaviour. Restrictions imposed by authorities during the pandemic created both opportunities and solutions for benefiting technological tools in the distance learning process. In general, just as no single learning theory has emerged for instruction, there are some available theories most of which are derived from the major learning theories, that have evolved for online education (Picciano, 2017).

According to Anderson and Dron (2011), like all other social and technological developments, distance education is historically constituted in the thinking and behavioural patterns of those developments. They are tested, and with their implementations that were once novel systems, and with the effects of technological developments in previous periods, they progressed by covering the previous period (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). Garrison (1985) and Aydemir et al. (2015) categorize the technological evolution of old and distance learning under three generations: *Correspondence, Telecommunications,* and *Computer*. When the periods and stages of distance education are examined, it is seen that information and communication technologies which are common in every period, are used in learning-teaching processes and these technologies determine the periods and stages of distance education (Bozkurt, 2017). In the categorization of Anderson and Dron (2011), Mass media, Conferencing, Web 2.0 interaction and participation draw attention. Distance Education, which originated in the mid-18th century, aimed to compensate for the insufficiency of traditional education. It rapidly developed from correspondence courses and tapes (Williams et al., 1998 *cited by* Sadeghi, 2019), audio-visual technologies (Bozkurt, 2017) to the release of personal computers and the applications of computer-based multimedia applications (Sadeghi, 2019). The Concept of distance learning first appeared in 1840, then within a few years, distance education programs became available in the UK, Germany, the USA and Japan (Debeş, 2021).

Tourism education, on the other hand, requires more practices (Cooper, 2002; Wang et al, 2010) than that of other social sciences. This education provides social, technical and managerial skills suitable for the success of people who will work in the tourism industry and for business purposes. In general, the subject focused on within the scope of tourism education is vocational education. Vocational education is the process of enabling individuals in a society to have a profession and to provide the individual with the knowledge, skills and application abilities required by the profession, and to develop the abilities of the person in terms of physical, intellectual, emotional, social and economic aspects (Aksu & Bucak, 2012; Üzümcü, 2015). During the theoretical education in the classroom environment the students are given practical applications that aim students to gain experience prior to beginning in tourism industry. For example, frontline departments such as front office, food and beverage operations and public relations etc. require students having some fundamental skills before starting the actual work environment. In addition, as a part of tourism, gastronomy education students should directly involve in practical applications in kitchen-class with the materials to prepare a dish in a physical realm, by face to face form and more interactively. Conducting the theoretical and practical courses together with a supervisor in a way that complements each other increases the ability of the students. However, distance learning is also non-location bound and time-independent through the use of synchronous *(live conferences)* and asynchronous *(flexible assignments)* means (Debeş, 2021). All activities and contents are placed in an ICT System that enables educators and learners' connection in a virtual classroom that is accessible from different locations. The ever-increasing relevance of distance learning also created the opportunities to access non-location bound and time-independent learning materials. Additionally, as mentioned above, there are two methods used for implementing distance learning systems as synchronous and asynchronous (Offir et al., 2008). In synchronous form, learners are simultaneously engaged in interactive and focused opportunities which are helping them to build a basic understanding of technology-enhanced instruction. On the

other hand, in the asynchronous form, with no direct interaction between learners and instructors, learners fulfil activities and such tasks as quizzes, group work assignments, group's discussion, feedback and projects (Debeş, 2021). The distance education framework requires a greater independent learning ability than that of the regular courses, mainly because it lacks full interaction between the students and the teachers (Offir et al., 2008).

In the literature, a number of studies that investigate the different dimensions of distance education at higher education also covering tourism education are available. Some of the research have investigated the effects and consequences of distance education in tourism especially after Covid 19 pandemic while some others date back earlier years. An earlier study before pandemic, by Williams and McKercher (2001) discussed the effects of online platforms on tourism education at the beginning of new millennium. In their study, the authors claimed that the factors of being a communication facilitator, an information source, cross-cultural understanding, a motivator, and the provision of a range of learning activities were determined as the advantages of online learning in tourism, while information overload, impersonal communication, computer literacy requirement for both parties, and need for efficient internet connection were negative ones. The third earlier study on distance tourism education was from Australia conducted by James Higham (2002). In his study, the author identifies computer mediated distance education as an exciting and challenging medium for tertiary tourism programs, despite some of the challenges during that time. All these studies were about the distance education as a complementary method for traditional learning systems and there was almost no obligation to use or participate online education and the studies were designed to investigate the possible effects of these systems on the students. Juliana et al. (2021) also discussed the main constraints of distance learning during the pandemic in Indonesia. Their descriptive qualitative research was designed to identify the obstacles faced by tourism students and main obstacles were found as poor internet connection and lack of focus on the lectures.

However, Covid 19 pandemic dictated the educational institutions to turn online systems in order to continue their education programs without any interruption. Therefore, the recent studies on distance education systems are more about the effects of online education on the students and adaptation of this systems as an obligation. Olcay and Dos (2007), tried to determine the student preferences or opinions about distance tourism education by surveying 232 students of a vocational school in Çankırı province in Turkey. Their findings represented that the students consider this system as more time and place flexible, but not good for efficient interaction with others. Buluk and Eşitti (2020) published their research findings while pandemic was continuing, and they investigated the adaptation of undergraduate tourism students to online system and their perception about it. Their findings showed that the students did not have negative ideas for online education but complained some technical problems. Following year, in 2021, it was found four studies on this topic in the literature. Oz (2021) investigated the student opinions about distance learning, surveying 2061 university students some of whom were tourism departments. His findings put forth that online learning was less effective than traditional face to face education systems. Similarly, Menemenci-Bahcelerli (2021) discussed the effects of distance education in tourism during the Covid 19 pandemic in her small-scale qualitative study. She found that tourism students had positive ideas about online systems, because it is possible to participate many international online meetings and seminars that will develop themselves through these systems despite some negative aspects as discussed earlier. Additionally, there are some research reports in 2022 when Covid 19 started to lose its effects and back to school period. The first one is the study conducted by Alrawadieh (2022), examining the perceptions of both parties of online education systems namely students and instructors. This is also a qualitative survey investigating the opinions of 12 students and 12 academics and the findings from very limited number of samples showed that students were happy for easy accessibility of information via online systems and its time flexibility, but unhappy for being deprived their social life at classes whereas lecturers raised concerns related to their lectures. The next study done by Chandra et al. (2022) which investigates the perception of tourism students for online learning using group discussion method. Their findings emphasize the importance of practical classes and on-site instructor comments on students' overall satisfaction.

In the literature there are some studies about the opinions of tourism educators as well. Yee and Law (2021) investigated the response actions of hospitality and tourism educators in Hong Kong. Işkın et al. (2022) also used qualitative method to measure the effects of distance education on the academics and teaching environment, and the findings converted to a SWOT Analysis table. According to this table, flexibility and cost effectiveness are the main benefits of this system whereas technical obstacles, lack of interest and unethical behaviors found to be major negative consequences from the viewpoint of academics. The newest publication in the literature is that of the study by Sanlioz-Ozgen & Küçükaltan (2023) right after the university education system entirely turned into on-site environment. The authors also employed a qualitative method designed to collect data from academics and findings reported in a SWOT Analysis table. Findings showed that accessibility, flexible time management and course design are the main strengths as uncontrollable student participation, lack of motivation and indifference were identified as major drawbacks of distance education.

1.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Learning

Learning is known as a purposeful activity where the learners gain knowledge or skill through practice. Authors define this phenomenon as a process where all the skills and competencies are acquired by individuals in order to understand and acquire specific knowledge and to apply this knowledge in their daily or professional life. Learning has always been as a two-party

process consisting of learners and instructors in the course of history. The most traditional and well-known form of learning is the face-to-face interaction between two parties in a classroom environment offered by a particular institution. However, as obviously witnessed, the Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected all the traditional education systems worldwide, leading to a rapid transition to emergency remote teaching (Johnson et al., 2020). Therefore, the results and effects of this transition on both parties are worth studying and to research by academics. There are numerous studies measuring the effects of e-learning on the learners by the educational psychologists, but less study on the instructors and academics.

A large number of studies suggests that the roles of e-instructors may be more complex than those of traditional instructors (Baran et al., 2011; Bawane & Spector, 2009; Berge, 2001; Goold et al., 2010). The research by Chang et al. (2014), about the views, reactions, and attitudes towards the e-learning practice and the roles of e-learning instructors of faculty members in higher education, indicates that "*content expertise*" and "*instructional designer*" are perceived by university/faculty as the key components in e-instruction in higher education". The study also shows the need for e-instructor training. The quality and the skills of instructors to use technology for providing guidance is vital for student engagement and interaction (Cigognini et al., 2011). Changing communication modes requires e-instructors to adapt to e-Learning environments (Ryan et al., 2010).

Dhawan (2020) reports that many academic units follow the traditional face-to-face model although many of them shifted to the mixed method of learning. A study by Roach and Lemasters (2006) about students' reactions to the advantages of online learning, explains that once students are not experiencing face-to-face classroom instruction, they will start using additional resources and become their own investigators, learning and discovering more about their capabilities as independent learners (Roach & Lemasters, 2006). Isayeva (2020) also claims that universities are currently required to provide faculty members who are competent enough in-student engagement activities and communication concerning the significance of student engagement in online learning.

The distance education model necessitates a greater degree of independent learning ability than the traditional courses, mainly because it lacks full interaction between the students and the teachers. Moore and Kearsley (1996) suggested a theory that posits that the autonomy required of the student increases with the increase in transactional distance. Linn (1996) claims that the independent learner is characterized by resourcefulness, which is mandatory for success in the course. On the other hand, learners who are not independent are unable to create learning opportunities and are therefore also unable to correctly assess their level of understanding.

Henri (1992) developed a communications model in order to examine the possibilities for interaction that exist in the distance learning method, which is an analytical model that includes participation, interaction, social, cognition and metacognition in messages for the content analysis of computerized dialogue. Similarly, and by doing some changes in Henri's model Oliver and McLaughlin (1996) developed a new one that includes the dimensions social, procedural, expository, explanatory and cognitive (Oliver & McLaughlin, 1996; *cited in* Offir et al., 2008). Offir and Lev (2000a, 2000b) in their model, listed the most frequent interactions in distance education as procedural and expository interactions, whereas in face to face teaching the explanatory and social interactions are more prevalent. Contradictorily, the availability of social interaction of students with the instructor in face-to-face teaching, the reshaping of learning by Covid 19 brings the result out of the absence of social interaction in the educational process, resulting in social isolation. O'Sullivan et al. (2017) argue that, from a social learning theory perspective, socialization, which is exercised in face-to-face learning, is a fundamental element for cognition and understanding. Face-to-face contact remains essential for human well-being, however, social media offers potential for online collaboration (O'Sullivan et al., 2017).

Cognitive skills support significant learning processes related to understanding, through cause, analysis, and evaluation, and ending in solving practical problems. Entwistle and Waterson (1988) notes the difference between "*surface processing*" and "*deep processing*" within the cognitive dimension of handling information. Deep learning processing is a process that takes place when students translate new information into engraved concepts and relate it to their life experience. Surface learning processing does not change the student's engraved thinking processes. Distance education obligates basic definitions for describing the surface and deep learning processes that occur during learning (Offir et al., 2008). Njenga and Fourie (2010) criticise the negative outcomes of e-learning by stressing on disregard and describing the situation as techno positivists. They also argue that proponents have marketed e-learning by focusing on its adoption as the right thing to do while disregarding, among other things, the concerns of the potential users, the adverse effects on users and the existing research on the use of e-learning or related innovations. Njenga and Fourie (2010) define techno positivist ideology as a '*compulsive enthusiasm*' about e-learning in higher education that is being created, propagated and channelled repeatedly by the people who are set to gain without giving the educators the time and opportunity to explore the dangers and rewards of e-learning on teaching and learning. It is widely argued that in higher education, it is driven by a personal agenda, with the aim of propagating a techno-positivist ideology to stakeholders (Njenga & Fourie, 2010).

Although some opposite views available assert that online learning will not replace traditional face-to-face delivery, it is also stressed that universities must be prepared for the new reality (Njenga & Fourie, 2010; Tamim, 2018). Additionally, regardless of how it happens, a shift to distance learning accelerated and triggered by Covid-19, the main concern among many is about the student-faculty interaction and peer interaction which is noteworthy.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sampling

This study was designed as exploratory research and conducted in higher education institutions in Turkey. The total number of academic instructors is 130.050 (http://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/[1]) and 605 in tourism-related higher educational institutions (https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/[2]) in all universities identified as the population of the study. The population of the research consists of lecturers who have received tourism education and teaching in tourism schools. In addition, even if they did not receive tourism education, but conduct a course from syllabus in a tourism-related college or four years of education, graduate and doctoral education in tourism have been accepted. Because tourism education is one of the multi-disciplinary fields where courses related to different disciplines are given as well as practice-oriented". In total, 600 participants majority of whom are from tourism-related departments responded via an online questionnaire, with 408 fully completed questionnaires found to be satisfactory for representing sample.

Simple Random Sampling Technique was used by targeting a sample frame of academics who have experienced distance teaching in the near past and during the Covid 19 and are currently teaching at various universities in Turkey. By applying simple random sampling, the researcher could access the participants with an interest to be interviewed and select the appropriate participants based on their knowledge and experience (Soleimani et al., 2019), and it was reached 228 tourism education backgrounded academics and 180 non tourism education backgrounded academics who teach in different departments.

2.2. Research Instrument

The intricate situation and crisis caused by Covid-19 outbreak in every field of life, brought about governments, institutions and even individuals to act more proactively. It was observed that the shift in the teaching/learning system from the face-to-face method to online teaching enabled numerous interruptions in higher education. Therefore, the need for empirical studies focusing on the perceptions, concerns, challenges and future opinions of instructors in tourism education in higher education. as the increasing number of institutions switched to distance education.

In this context, this study was empirically constituted for measuring the perceptions of tourism education backgrounded lecturers (academics, instructors) and lecturers that their background is related to other disciplines but teaching at universities partly or full time, their preference for the use of online tools during their teaching activities synchronously or asynchronously. For the purpose of measuring the perceptions, concerns, challenges and future opinions of academics based on distance education a scale that was constituted as the questionnaire form for data collection was developed by the authors. Although literature were carefully scanned and benefited, but no certain referenced paper including a specific scale and questionnaire designed for this matter were found for the moment of study. However, the ideas and statements in this paper were created and developed by the authors with the observation of universities' distance education systems, their materials and tools, based on the information given by the academics both from abroad and Turkey.

The questionnaire consists of 3 main sections. The *first section* was designed to have information about the demographics of respondents. The *second section* was organized to measure the general views of lecturers (academics, instructors) for distance teaching specifically; the difficulties, technical obstacles, advantages during the use of this method comparing the face-to-face method and what might be the opinions of users for the use of this method in future. For this purpose, the questionnaire was structured in a form of a *5-Point Likert Scale*, ranging from *Strongly Agree* (5) to *Strongly Disagree* (1). In response to statements that aims to find out the thoughts as the difficulties, technical obstacles, advantages and opinions about the usage in future that have low factor loads and placed in different factors were eliminated and reached best describing 38 statements distributed in four factors. Then it was reached an appropriate questionnaire as research instrument. Although it was found that the factor loads of some statements in the scale were lower than the factor loads of other statements, these loads were found to be acceptable in a five-point Likert-type scale (between 1 and 5), their existence in the scale was preserved and the data obtained was analysed in this direction.

The *third section* of the questionnaire was devised for describing the status and academic roles of instructors in the higher education system. The survey instrument was uploaded to Google Docs, a web-based survey platform and the web link of the questionnaire was sent to e-mail accounts of instructors who were in charge of teaching courses online. The number of fully completed and 408 returned questionnaires of total were taken into consideration for the analysis in this study. The quantity of returned questionnaires was found to be a satisfactory number as a representative sample of the targeted population. All the data were collected between mid-2020 and the end of May 2021.

2.3. Analysis

This study was structured and designed as an exploratory form to explore the reactions and thoughts of instructors of distance education in their teaching and learning environments in higher education. The collected data through questionnaire form consisting of 3 sections, and 38 statements were analysed in two forms. The first and third sections were implemented a descriptive analysis that would be able to explain demographics, level of courses conducted, distance learning course management systems and course materials. The data collected through questionnaire were tested whether they have reliable scores for implementing vital statistical analyses. The *varimax rotation* factor analysis was performed on the data in order to determine the factor structure of the scale, and *Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin* (KMO) test was used to test whether the scale is convenient for factor analysis and it was accepted as quite reliable (0.964 as p=0.000) at the end of process (see in table 5), and the data were processed through some statistical tests by SPSS software program. To capture and explore the relationship between variables, some statistical tests, such as t-test, one-way, anova, correlation and regression test were implemented to the data. The exploration of some tests that facilitates to understand the distance education in this study were summarized as seen in the findings section below.

3. FINDINGS

The results of the survey are explained in the following tables and related paragraphs below them. The first four tables display the *respondents' profile* and their *technology usage categories* for the courses they are in charge. The next table (5) represents their *perceptions, concerns* and *thoughts* about distance learning while the remaining tables explain the results of some *statistical analyses*.

Table 1. **Profile of respondents**

Variables	**f**	**%**
Demographics		
Tourism Field vs. Non-Tourism Field Respondents		
Tourism	228	55.9
Non-tourism	180	44.1
Gender		
Female	198	48.5
Male	210	51.5
Age		
35 and below	81	20.3
36-45	157	38.5
46 and over	168	41.2
Academic Title		
Full Professor	69	16.9
Associate Professor	78	19.1
Assistant Professor (Ph.D)	104	25.5
Instructor (Ph.D)	35	8.6
Instructor	122	29.9
Length of work at the university (work experiences)		
5 years and less	82	20.1
6-10 years	90	22.1
11 and over	236	57.8
History of online courses at the university (personally)		
Less than 6 months	92	22.5
7-12 months	185	45.3
13 months and over	131	32.1
Instructor status at the university		
Full time	385	94.4
Part time	10	2.5

Variables	**f**	**%**
Hourly based	13	3.2
Number of weekly courses given during the pandemic		
1-2 courses	51	12.5
3-4 courses	165	40.4
5 courses and over	192	47.1
The way to conduct lessons during the pandemic		
Asynchronous	35	8.6
Synchronous *(simultaneous)*	244	59.8
Both synchronous and asynchronous	129	31.6
Total	**408**	**100%**

According to the Table 1, showing the demographic characteristics of the participants, 228 of the 408 respondent academics/ educators were from tourism field, while the other 180 respondents were from other social sciences disciplines. The relative share of academics teaching tourism is 55.9% and others is 44.1%. Of all the participants 51.5% are male and 48.5% are female. In the context of age distribution, 41.2% are "46 *or more*", 38.5% are "36-45" and 20.3% are "35 *or less*". As of their academic title; 29.9% of the participants are lecturers, 25.5% are assistant professors with Ph.D. degree, 19.1% are associate professors, while 16.9% are full professors, and 8.6% are lecturers with Ph.D. 57.8% of the participants have been working as a lecturer/ staff at the university for "11 *years or more*", 22.1% "6-11 *years*" and 20.1% "5 *years or less*". 45.3% of the participants have been conducting online courses for "7-12 *months*", 32.1% for "13 *months or more*" and 22.5% for "6 *months or less*". Majority of the participants are full-time lecturers (94.4%). 47.1% of the participants conducted "5 *courses and more*" per week, 40.4% "3-4 *courses*" per week and 12.5% "1-2 *courses*" per week during the distance education period. In the context of the way the courses are conducted in the distance education, more than half of the participants (59.8%) conducted their courses synchronously (*simultaneously*).

Table 2: **Levels of the courses conducted during the pandemic**

Course level (classes)	**No**		**Yes**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Doctorate / Ph.D.	313	76.7	95	23.3
Master / Graduate	212	52.0	196	48.0
Bachelor / Undergraduate	140	34.3	268	65.7
Vocational School	264	64.7	144	35.3
Some Certificate Programmes	403	98.8	5	1.2

Course classes of the lectures during the distance education process are shown in Table 2. The most frequent course class is *undergraduate* while the least frequent one is *some certificate program*. The number of participants giving lectures at the *doctorate* level is 95, at the *master's degree* level is 196, at the *undergraduate* is 268, with the number of participants teaching at *vocational* school being 144 and the number of participants giving courses at *certificate programs* being only 5. As seen in Table 2, the largest percentage of online-based *(synchronous or asynchronous)* courses are seen at the *bachelor/undergraduate* level (n: 298, 65.7%) as expected.

Table 3: **Distance Learning Course Management Systems**

Name of System	**No**		**Yes**	
	n	**%**	**N**	**%**
Zoom	253	62.0	155	38.0
Google Class	362	99.7	46	11.3
Uzem	377	31.0	31	7.6
MS Team Meet	274	67.2	134	32.8
Perculus ALMS	383	93.9	25	6.1
Youtube	407	99.8	1	0.2
Canvas	400	98.0	8	2.0
Sakai	382	93.6	26	6.4
Moodle	358	87.7	50	12.3

Name of System	No		Yes	
	n	%	N	%
Adobe	378	92.6	30	7.4
BigBlueButton	387	94.9	21	5.1
Kahoot	407	99.8	1	0.2
BlueBird	407	99.8	1	0.2
Mergen	402	98.5	6	1.5
WhatsUp	407	99.8	1	0.2
BlackBoardLearn	395	96.8	13	3.2
Schoology	407	99.8	1	0.2

Table 3 shows the most popular distance education management systems used by the instructors. The most widely used education management systems are *Zoom* and *Microsoft Teams Meet*, while the least used ones are *Schoology, Youtube, Kahoot* and *WhatsApp.*

Table 4: **Presentation Software and Course Materials on Virtual Learning Environment**

Tools for instructions	No		Yes	
	n	%	n	%
Power Point or Prezi Slides *(silent)*	348	85.3	60	14.7
Power Point or Prezi Slides *(with audio narration)*	341	83.6	67	16.4
Power Point or Prezi Slides *(with video narration)*	387	94.9	21	5.1
Pre-recorded video or audio files	389	95.3	19	4.7
Live online lecture *(e.g. via Zoom, Skype, etc.)*	159	39.0	249	61.0

The number of course materials and software used by the participants in the distance education process are listed in Table 4 above. As seen in the table, the most preferred lecture method is a *live online course* (i.e. via *Zoom, Skype* etc.), and the least popular method is identified as *pre-recorded video* and/or *audio files.*

3.1. Statistical Tests, Reliability and Validity of the Analyses

The data were analysed and tested whether it has a reliable score for implementing vital statistical analyses. According to the experts, the value between $0.00 \leq \alpha \leq 0.40$ on the scale is not accepted as a *reliable scale*, but the value between $0.40 \leq \alpha \leq 0.60$ on the scale is known as *reliable*, with the value between $0.60 \leq \alpha \leq 0.80$ is accepted as *quite reliable*, and finally the value between $0.80 \leq \alpha \leq 1.00$ or over 0.80 on the scale is known as a *highly reliable one* (Akgül & Çevik, 2003: 428).

The *varimax rotation* factor analysis was performed on the data in order to determine the factor structure of the scale, and *Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin* (KMO) test was performed in order to test if the scale is convenient for factor analysis. *Bartlett Test Value* is calculated as 7687.346; as p value is at 0.000 level. KMO value is measured as 0.964 as p=0.000 level. As seen on Table 5, the *Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin* test value was found at a very high level of reliability with 0.934 value (>0.60) and this indicates that the sample size is large enough for analyses. *Bartlett Test* shows that there is no correlation among the variables (p=0.00) and it also indicates the consistency of the data to each other. As a result of the calculated statistics, it was found that the data collected from 408 respondents is large enough as sample size and convenient for factor analysis.

Table 5: **KMO and Barlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.934
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7687.346
	df	741
	Sig.	.000
Dimensions of the Scale		**Cronbach's Alpha**
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts		0.913
General Evaluation		0.817
Problems		0.819
Advantages		0.696
Total Scale		**0.858**

The questionnaire and contents were developed from the literature and the individual experiences by the authors since there was no previous study based on a scale accepted by experts (Illeris, 2003; Roach & Lemasters, 2006; Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014; Abuhammad, 2020; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Table 6 includes the dimensions of scale as statements and their factor loads. In the table, there are 4 groups of factors and 38 statements forming these factors. In order to find out the acceptable number of factors, the data collected on the scale were subjected to factor analysis in SPSS and distribution of statements about groups of factors have been observed. To achieve an appropriate outcome, Hair et al. (1998: 116) stated that to achieve an appropriate outcome, it is necessary to delete lower than (0.40) testified load at the same time multiple factors. With this approach, at the end of the factor analysis process, the factors which do not have sufficient *(meaningful)* load values or multiple ones were removed from the scale. According to the results of the analyses, it has reached an appropriate number of factors that is capable of explaining the "*distance learning scale*". As a result of the factor analysis, it was seen that the expressions were distributed in 4 dimensions as follows. Although, it is known that it requires presenting various acceptable evidences to claim the opposite, although the factor loads of some statements were found to be lower than others as a result of the factor distribution made in this study, they have a meaning in the Likert Scale and it was preferred to keep them in the scale to complete the study. And although the factor loadings of some statements were low, it was not ignored that they corresponded to a meaning between one and five on a five-point Likert Scale and generally neutral and positive in the direction of "agree". To continue again, in the first factor, the first expression is negative as -300 and, it should be removed from the scale because it takes a value less than 40 percent as Hair et al. (1998:116) suggested, but although it was accepted that the load value corresponds to a negative side and neutral on the five-point Likert scale. Another reason that could not be ignored and might facilitate to explain the study more, since it was one of the strong statements that explains opinions about the fields that require practice of academics.

It was found that 16 of these statements were in the dimension (factor) of "*Satisfaction and Future Thoughts*", 8 in the "*General Evaluation*" dimension(factor), 9 in the "*Problems*" dimension (factor) and 5 in the "*Advantages*" dimension (factor).

Table 6: **Scale dimensions(factors)/statements and factor loads**

Factor - 1	***Satisfaction and Future Thoughts***	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Factor Loads**
1	Distance education cannot be effective and sufficient for courses in fields that require practice.	4.30	1.03	- 0.300
2	Online environments are as beneficial for students as face-to-face learning.	2.40	1.10	0.615
3	I would like to teach online from now on.	3.10	1.17	0.765
4	Distance and online teaching may be an effective form of teaching in the future.	3.44	1.14	0.670
5	I would not recommend teaching online to anyone.	2.70	1.17	- 0.760
6	The courses I took online were very satisfying.	2.84	1.06	0.660
7	I can only teach online in compulsory situations.	3.33	1.19	- 0.641
8	Some online courses may be optional for students.	3.91	0.87	0.341
9	Online courses are not effective and beneficial for both parties (teacher and student).	2.93	1.23	- 0.737
10	Online lessons can only be a supportive tool for traditional face-to-face lessons.	3.70	1.07	- 0.512
11	Online teaching is a reliable teaching method.	3.00	1.03	0.623
12	Compared to traditional teaching, I was able to focus more easily on my lessons in the online teaching process.	2.51	1.12	0.543
13	I feel more comfortable teaching online compared to traditional teaching.	2.63	1.17	0.538
14	I consider continuing my online courses when necessary.	3.45	1.08	0.722
15	Online learning is a less effective teaching method than traditional teaching.	3.70	1.12	- 0.678
16	The topics given in the online environment are more limited compared to the traditional teaching environment.	3.36	1.22	- 0.489
Factor-2	***General Evaluation***			
1	Compared to traditional teaching, my students were able to focus on their lessons more easily during the online teaching process.	2.01	1.00	- 0.546
2	It is difficult to motivate students to learn online	3.85	1.05	0.593
3	Students are highly participatory during the online classes.	2.14	1.00	- 0.652

4	Compared to the traditional course environment, communication with students is more intense in online courses.	2.00	1.00	- 0.627
5	The online environment lacks the effectiveness of two-party (student-teacher) face-to-face interaction.	4.25	0.90	0.540
6	Online exams are difficult to control by the instructor (during the exam).	4.41	0.89	0.583
7	In the online environment, the instructor has no effect on the student's more active participation in the lesson.	3.22	1.18	0.291
8	It has not been easy to keep my students' interest in the course under my control during the online teaching process.	3.96	2.00	0.595
Factor - 3	***Problems***			
1	Online teaching can be daunting due to some technical issues (unexpected internet interruptions, under-equipped devices, etc.).	3.81	1.05	0.423
2	Students cannot easily connect to the online learning system.	3.27	1.04	0.317
3	Compared to traditional teaching forms, preparations for online teaching require more technical tools and preparation.	3.93	1.05	0.754
4	Online courses require more infrastructure and hardware than other courses.	3.94	1.06	0.746
5	The workload for the instructors of an online course is higher than for other courses.	3.90	1.06	0.774
6	The online learning process is quite tiring.	3.60	1.10	0.634
7	Online learning is a very time-consuming process.	3.40	1.14	0.708
8	The infrastructure required for all students to access the course simultaneously (video) in the online environment is insufficient.	3.64	1.12	0.429
9	Internet use for online courses can be quite costly for students.	3.51	1.13	0.499
Factor - 4	***Advantages***			
1	The work/study load of the student can be increased by giving a lot of homework in the online environment.	3.35	1.07	0.478
2	Online courses are less costly for institutions than the traditional learning system.	3.55	1.08	0.679
3	Online courses are more environmentally friendly (in terms of energy and consumable use).	3.64	1.02	0.649
4	Online environments provide access to lessons from anywhere *(Phone, tablet, computer, etc.)*	4.20	0.80	0.717
5	There is the opportunity to benefit from multiple educational tools in online courses (such as audio-visual tools, PP slides, different file types, online communication, linear video communication, etc	4.00	0.84	0.619

T-Test results of **tourism field and non-tourism field academics** in terms of *dimension of scale* are seen as below in table 7.

Table 7: **Results of t-test and significance level of dimensions by tourism and non-tourism field academics**

Dimension	**Tourism field and non-tourism field academics/educators**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**t**	**p-value**
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	Tourism	228	3.0200	.31092	0.489	0.625
	Non-tourism	180	3.0049	.31117		
General Evaluation	Tourism	228	3.2390	.34310	0.765	0.445
	Non-tourism	180	3.2132	.33340		
Problems	Tourism	228	3.6910	.68155	1.031	0.303
	Non-tourism	180	3.6198	.70820		
Advantageous	Tourism	228	3.7561	.60759	0.333	0.739
	Non-tourism	180	3.7344	.70618		

In Table 7, t-test results show that there is no significant difference between **tourism and non-tourism field academics** in terms of *dimension of scale*.

Table 8 shows the results of t-test and significance level of dimensions (*factors*) by gender and Table 8 shows One-way Anova results and significance levels of dimensions by the *ages of Instructors,* respectively.

Table 8: **Results of t-test and significance level of dimensions by gender**

Dimension	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p-value
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	M	210	2.7402	0.74256	- 2.375	0.018*
	F	197	2.9235	0.81073		
General Evaluation	M	210	1.9839	0.63993	- 2.186	0.029*
	F	197	2.1269	0.67957		
Advantages	M	210	3.7381	0.66963	- 0.250	0.803
	F	197	3.7543	0.63611		
Problems	M	210	3.6180	0.67703	- 1.290	0.198
	F	197	3.7067	0.71010		

* Significance level: 0.05.

In Table 8, t-test results show that there is a significant difference between males and females in terms of *Future and General thoughts* variables. In terms of both variables, the mean of females was found to be higher than that of male participants. There was no significant difference for the *Advantages and Problems* variables.

Table 9: **One-way Anova results and significance levels of dimensions by the *ages of instructors***

Dimension	Age	N	Mean	Std. Er.	F	p-value
General Evaluation	26-35	83	1.9910	0.67450	1.150	0.329
	36-45	157	2.0223	0.62299		
	46-55	125	2.0820	0.67541		
	56 +	43	2.2006	0.72792		
Advantages	26-35	83	3.8048	0.73184	1.026	0.381
	36-45	157	3.7682	0.64629		
	46-55	125	3.6640	0.63174		
	56 +	43	3.7953	0.56144		
Problems	26-35	83	3.7309	0.68474	2.027	0.110
	36-45	157	3.6334	0.75438		
	46-55	125	3.7182	0.61258		
	56 +	43	3.4470	0.67390		
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	26-35	83	2.7681	0.85141	2.495	0.059
	36-45	157	2.9427	0.76274		
	46-55	125	2.7030	0.75792		
	56 +	43	2.8939	0.71671		

According to analysis of variance (Anova) results, there were no significant differences among the age categories for the variables in question.

Table 10: **One-way Anova results and significance levels among the dimensions and the *number of courses* given by instructors**

Dimensions	Courses Given	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	P-Value
General Evaluation	1 course	14	2.3393	0.63441	1.959	0.100
	2 courses	37	2.2061	0.65300		
	3 courses	78	2.0561	0.71868		
	4 courses	87	2.1078	0.64140		
	5 courses and more	192	1.9766	0.64333		

Advantages	1 course	14	4.0143	0.43298	2.826	0.025*
	2 courses	37	3.8811	0.51953		
	3 courses	78	3.8846	0.66880		
	4 courses	87	3.6368	0.62768		
	5 courses and more	192	3.6948	0.67844		
Problems	1 course	14	3.6349	0.56392	2.574	0.037*
	2 courses	37	3.3393	0.75129		
	3 courses	78	3.6852	0.68714		
	4 courses	87	3.6245	0.68415		
	5 courses and more	192	3.7286	0.68566		
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	1 course	14	2.8661	0.72426	1.625	0.167
	2 courses	37	3.1284	0.71047		
	3 courses	78	2.7837	0.73502		
	4 courses	87	2.8384	0.70971		
	5 courses and more	192	2.7819	0.83657		

* Significance level: 0.05.

Table 11: **One-way Anova results and significance levels among the *dimensions* and *academic title* of the respondents**

Dimensions	Title	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	P-Value
General Evaluation	Research Assistant	11	2.4091	1.03394	1.835	0.121
	Lecturer	145	2.0310	0.63045		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	1.9700	0.61841		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	2.0465	0.63932		
	Full Professor	69	2.1739	0.72957		
Advantages	Research Assistant	11	4.1273	0.68278	2.510	0.041*
	Lecturer	145	3.8414	0.62756		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	3.6635	0.70684		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	3.6897	0.66109		
	Full Professor	69	3.6754	0.57405		
Problems	Research Assistant	11	3.8182	0.91121	1.139	0.338
	Lecturer	145	3.6199	0.70912		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	3.6496	0.71419		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	3.7863	0.65104		
	Full Professor	69	3.5813	0.63405		
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	Research Assistant	11	3.2273	1.23752	1.232	0.297
	Lecturer	145	2.8306	0.79529		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	2.8618	0.79046		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	2.7091	0.75746		
	Full Professor	69	2.8460	0.65957		

* Significance level: 0.05.

According to the results of Analysis of Variance (Anova), a significant difference was found between the *number of courses* given in terms of *advantages and problems* variables. According to the *Duncan multi-comparison* test results, which was conducted to determine the source of the difference, there were significant differences between 1 course and 5 courses, and 1 course and 4 courses in terms of *advantages* variable. The averages of those who had 1 lecture were higher in terms of this variable. For the *problems* variable, significant differences were found between 2 courses and 3; 2 and 4; and 2 and 5 courses. For this variable, the averages of 5 *courses and more* were found to be higher. As a result, it can be said that the method is advantageous if the number of the courses are few, but some problems may arise as the number of courses gets higher.

Table 12: **One-way Anova results and significance levels among the *dimensions* and *academic title* of the respondents**

Dimensions	Title	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	P-Value
General Evaluation	Research Assistant	11	2.4091	1.03394	1.835	0.121
	Lecturer	145	2.0310	0.63045		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	1.9700	0.61841		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	2.0465	0.63932		
	Full Professor	69	2.1739	0.72957		
Advantages	Research Assista.nt	11	4.1273	0.68278	2.510	0.041*
	Lecturer	145	3.8414	0.62756		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	3.6635	0.70684		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	3.6897	0.66109		
	Full Professor	69	3.6754	0.57405		
Problems	Research Assistant	11	3.8182	0.91121	1.139	0.338
	Lecturer	145	3.6199	0.70912		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	3.6496	0.71419		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	3.7863	0.65104		
	Full Professor	69	3.5813	0.63405		
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	Research Assistant	11	3.2273	1.23752	1.232	0.297
	Lecturer	145	2.8306	0.79529		
	Lecturer (Ph.D.)	104	2.8618	0.79046		
	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	78	2.7091	0.75746		
	Full Professor	69	2.8460	0.65957		

* Significance level: 0.05.

According to the Anova test results, a significant difference was found between the academic titles in terms of the *Advantages* variable (p=0.041<0.05). According to the results of *Duncan multiple comparison test* statistics that was conducted to determine the source of the difference, there were significant differences between *research assistants-doctor lecturers, research assistants-associate professors* and *research assistants-professors*. The averages of those who were *research assistants* were found to be higher.

Table 13: **One-way Anova results and significance levels between the dimensions and the *work experiences of instructors***

Dimensions	Years Served	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	p-value
General Evaluation	1-2 years	40	1.8781	0.49394	1.350	0.251
	3-5 years	42	2.0565	0.57990		
	6-8 years	45	1.9500	0.54707		
	8-10 years	45	2.1528	0.77234		
	10+ years	236	2.0826	0.69376		
Advantages	1-2 years	40	3.8000	0.59226	0.166	0.956
	3-5 years	42	3.7476	0.65527		
	6-8 years	45	3.7600	0.79613		
	8-10 years	45	3.7867	0.58527		
	10+ years	236	3.7271	0.64770		
Problems	1-2 years	40	3.7778	0.59384	0.587	0.672
	3-5 years	42	3.5608	0.76586		
	6-8 years	45	3.6667	0.73168		
	8-10 years	45	3.7111	0.76703		
	10+ years	236	3.6460	0.67589		

Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	1-2 years	40	2.5953	0.71527	1.045	0.384
	3-5 years	42	2.8869	0.75925		
	6-8 years	45	2.8375	0.87046		
	8-10 years	45	2.8875	0.74853		
	10+ years	236	2.8448	0.78112		

Table 14: **One-way Anova Results and significance levels between *distance learning form* and the dimensions**

Dimensions	Distance Education Form	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	p-value
General Evaluation	Asynchronously	35	1.9679	0.57709	2.562	0.078
	Synchronously	244	2.0041	0.63352		
	Both synchronously and asynchronously	127	2.1575	0.72086		
Advantages	Asynchronously	35	3.7086	0.78717	0.490	0.613
	Synchronously	244	3.7754	0.59439		
	Both synchronously and asynchronously	127	3.7102	0.71922		
Problems	Asynchronously	35	3.9079	0.49286	2.499	0.083
	Synchronously	244	3.6302	0.69362		
	Both synchronously and asynchronously	127	3.6448	0.73490		
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	Asynchronously	35	2.6196	0.67321	2.675	0.070
	Synchronously	244	2.8020	0.75540		
	Both synchronously and asynchronously	127	2.9385	0.84306		

According to the results of the Anova test, there was no significant *difference* between the *statements* given by the lecturers, who conduct their courses either *synchronously,* or *asynchronously*, and *both of them (combination of two systems)*, to the dimensions of the scale in terms of the teaching styles of the courses. In this study, as the variables that did not have a significant difference; there was no significant difference in terms of the *ages* of the faculty members participating in the research, and there was no significant difference between the variables of *full-time* and *part-time* faculty members and all the dimensions of the scale.

Table 15: **Correlations between the dimensions *(as variables)***

Dimensions	Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	General Evaluation	Advantages	Problems
Satisfaction and Future Thoughts	1	0.710**	0.414**	-0.474**
General Evaluation	0.710**	1	0.272**	-0.457**
Advantages	0.414**	0.272**	1	-0.224**
Problems	-0.474**	-0.457**	-0.224**	1

**Significance level: 0.001.

In Table 15, the correlation coefficients (results) between the views of the faculty members and the sub-dimensions of the distance education scale, as *satisfaction and thoughts about the future, general evaluation, advantages and problems* are given. According to the results, there was a positive (r=0.710; p<0.001) relationship between *general evaluation* and *satisfaction and future thoughts*, and a positive relationship *(correlation)* between *the advantages* of the distance education system and *satisfaction and future thoughts* (r=0.414; p<0.001) as well. Another positive relationship was found between *general evaluation* and *advantages* (r=0.272; p<0.001). To put it differently; *positive approaches of the instructors* in the general evaluation dimensions (factors) also positively affects the *superiority of distance education* dimensions (factors) (r=0.272 p<0.001), as well as increasing their satisfaction and their thoughts about being a viable teaching method in the future (r = 0.710; p<0.00). On the other hand, it was found that there is a *negative* relationship (r=- 0.474; p<0.001) between the problems faced by faculty members in the distance education system and their satisfaction and thoughts about the future. Parallel to this, it was found that there was a *negative relationship* (r=-0.224; p<0.001) between the dimensions (factors), the *problems* and the *general evaluation* (r=-0.45; p<0.00) and the advantages of the distance education method. The most important result of the correlation analysis is the fact that the problems encountered by the academics in the distance education method may cause their satisfaction levels

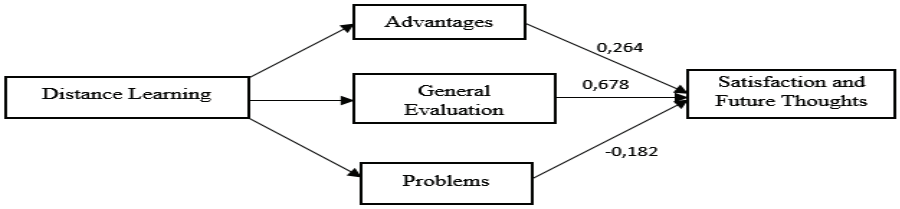
to decrease and the decrease in *their beliefs about this method*. However, it may become a workable method in the future when the problems are reduced or eliminated. When considering instructors as one of the parties the teaching process constitutes, the satisfaction and the problems encountered by the instructors, decrease the acceptance rate of this method to that extent. As the problems in the method increase, the satisfaction and opinions of the academics about the method decrease the viability of this method in the future to that extent ($r = -0.474$; $p<0.001$). Although the problems dimension has significant effects on other dimensions ($r=-0.457$; $p<0.001$) and ($r=-0.224$; $p<0.001$), these negative effects also reveal that it has more negative effects on *satisfaction* and its workability in the future. As a result, it can be predicted that the feasibility of this method in the future will be affected more *positively* providing that the elimination of the problems as explained by the correlation coefficients.

Table 16: **Regression analysis and *instructors' thoughts* on the workability of distance education as a teaching method in the future**

	B	**Std. Er.**	β	**t**	**P (sig)**
Constant	1.110	0.257		4.323	0.000
General Evaluation	0.679	0.044	0.576	15.527	0.000
Advantages	0.264	0.040	0.221	6.525	0.000
Problems	- 0.182	0.041	- 0.161	- 4.408	0.000

R: 0.760 **R^2**: 0.577 **$F_{3.404}$**: 183.674 **p**: 0.000

Figure 1: **Regression Model**



The regression model for this investigation was established as seen in equation (1). Based on the linear multiple regression analysis, all the relationships among the variables are shown in Table 16 and in the equation below, and *Satisfaction and Future Thoughts* were considered as the *dependent variable* while *general evaluation, advantages and problems* were *independent variables*. According to the established model, the equation of the dimensions in order to explain *satisfaction and future thoughts* is designed as follows.

Satisfaction and Future Thoughts = 1.110 + 0.679 *x General Evaluation* + 0.264 *x Advantages* – 0.182 *x Problems* (1)

According to the regression analysis results, the workability of distance education methods in the future is explained approximately 58% by situational factors. The remaining 42% is explained by other variables (dimensions) which are not included in this study. Among the factors in this equation, "*general evaluation"* is the most effective variable on the *"satisfaction and workability"* in the future as future thoughts in distance education method according to what the instructors experienced in the distance teaching method either synchronously or asynchronously in Turkey's higher education system. "*Advantages"* was found as the second *forceful variable* affecting *"satisfaction and future thoughts"* of instructors. Similarly, the dimension of "*problems"* has been found to be statistically significant on the dimension of *"satisfaction and future thoughts"*. But, comparatively, to the other dimensions, it has been found that the dimension of "*problems"* has a negative effect on "*satisfaction and future thoughts"*. This is a quite predictable outcome due to the occurrence of problems during the workability of this distance education model by the instructors. It can also be predicted that instructors perceive that the more problems they encountered, the less they are willing to use this model as a teaching method. Regression analysis results also explain that any increase in "*problems*" may have the potential to decrease (-0.182) the acceptability of this method for the instructors. Contrary to that, one unit (1) increase in the dimension of *general evaluation* can create a 0.679 unit increase in the acceptability of the *distance education method* as instructors experienced the method in tourism education at university level. Additionally, a unit increase (1) in the dimension of *advantages* can have a potential for a 0.264 unit increase in the acceptability (*workability*) of this model.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With the imposition of the pandemic conditions, academic education was shifted to distance mode from face-to-face system either partially or entirely in Turkey during the outbreak. Some considerable findings were obtained in this study. Based on the education background, t-test results show that there is no significant difference between **tourism and non-tourism field academics** in terms of *dimension of scale*. It is possible to express some results as in the following lines, covering all academicians. According to the gentlemen instructors, this model is usually not effective for student participation to lecture

sessions, nor motivate the students for concentration on the courses as well as face to face learning method, contrary to their female counterparts' viewpoints. Female instructors' evaluation for the model and future prospects has a little bit of higher scores than their male counterparts, while they marked the problems of distance learning at the highest average score. According to the results of analysis of variance (Anova), a significant difference was found between the number of courses given in terms of "*advantages*" and "*problems*" dimensions. The averages of those who gave one (1) lecture were higher in terms of average variable. As a result, it was observed that the method is advantageous if the instructors handle less courses. These findings were found similar in this research and supporting the previous studies (Şanlıöz-Özgen and Küçükaltan, 2023). However, problems may arise as the number of courses increase, in the sense that per the academic title of participants, the evaluation points allocated by the *research assistants* to the statements for the "*advantages"* dimension are higher than other instructors. Research assistants perceive the model more advantageous in comparison to other instructors. It was also found that as the title of the academics are getting higher, the beliefs for the "*advantages*" of the model keeps diminishing. Those findings are similar with the study done by Işkın et al. (2022), and in their qualitative method to measure the effects of distance education on the academics and teaching environment, they found flexibility and cost effectiveness were the main benefits of this system whereas technical obstacles, lack of interest and unethical behaviors found to be major negative consequences from the viewpoint of academics.

Correlation results explain that there was a *positive* relationship ($r=0.710$; $p<0.001$) between "*general evaluation"* and "*satisfaction and future thoughts"*, a positive relationship ($r=0.414$; $p<0.001$) also found between "*the advantages"* of the distance education system and "*satisfaction and future thoughts"*. Another positive relationship was found between "*general evaluation"* and "*advantages"* ($r=0.272$; $p<0.001$). On the other hand, there was a negative relationship ($r=-0.474$; $p<0.001$) determined between the "*problems*" faced by faculty members in the distance education system and their "*satisfaction and future thoughts*" variables. The most significant result of the correlation analysis is that the "*problems*" encountered by the academics in the distance education method cause their "*satisfaction levels*" to decrease and the decrease in their "*beliefs*" or reliance for this method. However, it may become a "down-to-earth" method in the future when the problems are eliminated. The findings also explain that as the "*problems*" of online education escalate, "*satisfaction*" and the "*opinions*" of the academics about whether this can be a "v*iable method in the future*" regress to negative. As a result, it can be predicted that the workability of this method in the future will be based on the elimination of the problems encountered by the respondents, as the correlation analyses results explain. Most frequently reported disadvantages or negative aspects of distance learning are lack of student motivation and interest, low level of course participation, deprivation of social life and technical obstacles while flexibility and cost effectiveness were identified as major benefits of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Similar findings were found in this research supporting the previous studies done by Şanlıöz-Özgen and Küçükaltan (2023).

One of the noteworthy regression analysis results in this study shows that the dimension of "*problems*" has a negative effect on the "*satisfaction and future thoughts*" of the instructors. Instructors perceive that the more problems they encountered, the less they are willing to use distant teaching method. Regression analysis results also explain that one unit increase in "*problems*" in this system may have a -0.182 unit decrease of "*workability*" of the method according to the instructor's viewpoint. Contrary to that, one unit increase in the dimension of "*general evaluation*" creates a 0.679 unit increase in the "*workability*" of the distance education system as experienced by instructors. Additionally, one unit increase in the dimension of "*advantages*" creates a 0.264 unit positive change in the "*workability*" of this model. When the problems solved academics in higher education find distance education is applicable. This result is similar with the findings in paper revealed by Şanlıöz-Özgen and Küçükaltan (2023) as they have found that accessibility, flexible time management and course design are the main strengths as uncontrollable student participation, lack of motivation and indifference were identified as the major drawbacks of distance education.

According to the results of the Anova test, there was no significant difference among the "*statements*" given by the lecturers, who conduct their online lectures either synchronously, or asynchronously and both, to the "*dimensions (factors)"* of the scale in terms of their teaching styles of the courses. Finally, this study determined that there were no significant differences among the "*age categories*" of the faculty members who participated in this research, and there was no significant difference between the variables of *full-time* and *part-time faculty members* and all "*dimensions*" of the scale. In comparison to previous studies in this topic, it can be said that there are some commonalities and differences.

As conclusion, some noticeable results were found in this study from the viewpoints of instructors who constitute the most active side of the teaching process for the matter involved. The findings of this study explain that the instructors consider that the main setbacks of the system were heavy workload, requirement for improved infrastructure and hardware for preparation, unexpected interruptions and less interactivity, inability to control over students during their exams. These findings are supported by the literature as well (Işkın et al. 2022). On the other hand, it was found that the distant education less motivates students to courses in tourism education as for view of instructors. This result is similar to the findings in the literature (Şanlıöz-Özgen and Küçükaltan, 2023; Swan, 2003), since students struggle with feelings of isolation and disconnectedness from their peers and instructors, and these results are also compliance with the findings in the paper published by Buluk and Eşitti (2020). Another considerable finding in this study is that this method might be used optionally based on instructors' perceptions in tourism education. However, the quality of online courses is a main concern in the literature since effective online courses require careful design, development, and implementation, and the success is highly dependent on the quality of the instructional

design and adequate technology (Means et al., 2010). Based on the age categories, instructors between 26-35 (mostly research assistants) perceive this model is somewhat advantageous for them. It was also found that the instructors consider that this model cannot be adapted to the courses that require a lot of practices. For most cases, this might be the basic characteristic of tourism education since most of the course contents are closely connected to the practices. However, the young instructors consider that this could be overcame by some online practices. Additionally, lack of effectiveness of face-to-face interaction and difficulties to control over students during their exams are the main concerns for both gender participants, but according to the female instructors, distance education in tourism is substantially difficult in comparison to other social disciplines.

To sum up, distance learning has become a popular option for universities seek to provide flexible, accessible, and high-quality education to their students, even after the pandemic period. While there are still some challenges to be addressed, the literature suggests that the distance learning can also be as effective as traditional education systems. Overall, the literature suggests that the distance learning can be an effective and flexible mode of education (Anderson, 2011), but it requires careful planning and implementation to ensure its success and to reach targeted outcomes.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the fact that barely 58% of all participants were tourism academics representing their ideas and opinions about distance learning as a viable method in the future. Another limitation is that this research did not include the views and opinions of the students who constitute the other party of education system. This study is also far from fully explaining the applicability of distance education in the future, which is the subject of this study. For this reason, this study offers only the frame of instructors' viewpoints while the other players of the education system, namely students' viewpoints were not taken into consideration.

Contribution to literature

This study contributes to existing literature by investigating the opinions of academics about the distance education based on their experiences throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. The content of questionnaire was developed by the authors in order to collect data from various universities in the country, since there was no scale (questionnaire) previously developed by others in the field. This study also tried to measure the effectiveness of different software programs and instruction tools developed by companies such as power-point and prezi. The research findings discuss the effectiveness and possible effects of the ways to conduct lectures through online platforms on the students and instructors in terms of their synchronicity or asynchronicity. The study discussed the effects of distance learning system through 4 different dimensions as overall satisfaction and future thoughts of academics, general evaluation of the system, the major problems of drawbacks and benefits or advantages of online learning environment, and the major findings are explained in the related sections of this paper. Finally, this paper displays the opinions of educators based on their titles and academic positions majority of whom were heavily the members of tourism related departments.

Recommendations for Future Research

Educational institutions are one of the areas where the repercussions of Covid-19 have forced compulsory innovations as widely seen. The Covid-19 crisis has spurred innovation at education organizations across the globe, helping them respond to these unprecedented times. Thus, imposition of the pandemic restrictions has leaded and accelerated the use of innovation in academic education. But the use of advanced software programs during the online courses to continue uninterrupted training as a consequence of Covid 19 outbreak partly proved us that it might have a potential to cause a creative destruction as well. Vastly adaptation of technology enhanced distance education to the courses put forth that it might end the implementation of traditional form of teaching because of the creative destruction it may lead. This study partly explains that distance education might only be an alternative way of teaching. Hence, on the name of using this system as a common form of teaching, researchers should focus on the other party of teaching system, namely the students and other disciplines which is not included in this study. Additionally, the scale needs to be developed to measure the effectiveness of distance learning including different parties of education system. Lastly, technologically supported distance education can lead the leave of traditional teaching methods or it may enable unpredictable benefits as the result of creative destruction. Researchers are also recommended to have a holistic approach to these issues in their further studies.

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