

RESEARCH

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**HIGHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC: COMMUNICATION BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY
LECTURERS IN THE ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROCESS**

**Educación superior en Turquía durante la pandemia de Covid-19:
barreras de comunicación experimentadas por los profesores en el
proceso de educación a distancia en línea**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is the communicative barriers experienced by the lecturers working at a university in the south of Turkey during the distance education process, by evaluating Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver's Information Theory and Melvin DeFleur's communication model who revised this theory, due diligence on distance education of higher education in Turkey. In this study, which was designed using the phenomenology pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods, an in-depth interview was conducted with a study group consisting of sixteen lecturers who had experience in distance education in the past and were currently teaching distance education, determined by the snowball sampling method. The data obtained from the interviews were transferred to the NVivo 10 program and twelve main themes that hindered the effective communication of lecturers were determined. The determined themes were analyzed with thematic. As a result of the analyzes, it was

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found that the lecturers were mainly exposed to the legislation-based communicative noise and feedback problem during the distance education process, and this situation negatively affected their job satisfaction and productivity.

Keywords: Communication Barriers, Communication Sciences, Communication Theories, Communicative Feedback, Communicative Noise, Distance Education, Semi-structured Interview.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio son las barreras comunicativas experimentadas por los profesores que trabajan en una universidad en el sur de Turquía durante el proceso de educación a distancia, mediante la evaluación de la teoría de la información de Claude Elwood Shannon y Warren Weaver y el modelo de comunicación de Melvin DeFleur que revisó esta teoría, la debida diligencia. sobre la educación a distancia de la educación superior en Turquía. En este estudio, que fue diseñado utilizando el patrón de fenomenología, que es uno de los métodos de investigación cualitativos, se realizó una entrevista en profundidad con un grupo de estudio compuesto por dieciséis profesores que tenían experiencia en educación a distancia en el pasado y actualmente impartían educación a distancia, determinado por el método de muestreo de bola de nieve. Los datos obtenidos de las entrevistas fueron trasladados al programa NVivo 10 y se determinaron doce temas principales que dificultaban la comunicación efectiva de los disertantes. Los temas determinados fueron analizados con temática. Como resultado de los análisis, se constató que los docentes estuvieron expuestos mayoritariamente al problema de la claridad en la comunicacion sobre la legislacion y falta de realimentacion de los estudiantes durante el proceso de educación a distancia, situación que afectó negativamente su satisfacción laboral y productividad.

Palabras clave: Barreras de comunicación, Ciencias de la Comunicación, Teorías de la Comunicación, Feedback Comunicativo, Ruido Comunicativo, Educación a Distancia, Entrevista Semiestructurada.

Educação superior na Turquia durante a pandemia de Covid-19: Barreiras de comunicação experimentadas pelos professores no processo de educação online à distância

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo são as barreiras comunicativas vivenciadas por professores que atuam em uma universidade no sul da Turquia durante o processo de educação a distância, avaliando a teoria da informação de Claude Elwood Shannon e Warren Weaver e o modelo de comunicação de Melvin DeFleur que revisou essa teoria , com avaliação previa .Sobre o ensino a distância do ensino superior na Turquia. Neste estudo, que foi desenhado utilizando o padrão fenomenológico, que é um dos métodos de pesquisa qualitativa, foi realizada uma entrevista em profundidade com um grupo de estudo composto por dezesseis professores que tiveram experiência em educação a distância no passado e atualmente. A pesquisa foi determinada pelo método de amostragem bola de neve. Os dados obtidos nas entrevistas foram transferidos para o

programa NVivo 10 e foram determinados doze temas principais que dificultavam a comunicação efetiva dos palestrantes. Os temas determinados foram analisados dentro do contexto e referencia. Como resultado da análise, constatou-se que os docentes foram, em sua maioria, expostos ao problema da clareza na comunicação sobre a legislação e a falta de feedback dos alunos durante o processo de educação a distância, situação que afetou negativamente sua satisfação profissional e produtividade.

Palavras-chave: Barreiras da Comunicação, Ciências da Comunicação, Teorias da Comunicação, Feedback Comunicativo, Ruído Comunicativo, Educação a Distância, Entrevista Semiestruturada.

1. INTRODUCTION

As described in *Deschooling Society* written by Ivan Illich (2006, pp. 40-51), School is a flexible term and place, where there are both learners and teachers at the same time, learners are classified according to their ages, time is arranged for education/teaching, and learners are subjected to rules regarding consistency in attendance. Illich argued that a traditional school in a factual sense does not offer equal opportunities to people, but developing new communication technologies can create equal opportunities about learning. According to him, mass communication tools such as television and radio shall help record educational elements and establish a global educational network. This understanding of a global school put forth by Illich as an assumption has ceased to exist as a utopia in today's post-modern world. Because today, the dynamic structure of internet technology, which is developing day by day, on the one hand, increases the intensity of education sessions conducted through digital technologies, and on the other hand, allows distance education to be carried out.

Distance education concept, which provides flexibility for time and place of education, in Article No. 4 of "Principles and Procedures of Distance Education in Higher education Institution" is defined as:

Higher education teaching activities provided by lecturers to learners simultaneously and/or in a nonsimultaneous way without the obligation to be present in the same place based in mutual interactions between students and lecturers and only students, planned and conducted by information and communication technologies. (YÖK, 2020a)

Distance education offers an alternative to face-to-face education in certain times of crisis, where gathering people under the same roof poses a problem/obstacle. An example of the above-mentioned crisis occurred in our time and reached a dimension that concerns all humanity. The Covid-19 virus, which occurred in Wuhan, China in the last days of 2019, spread around the world in a short period and was defined as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). The pandemic, which evolved into a global crisis, led to various changes and transformations in the field of education, as well as in all areas of everyday life. In this sense, due to the need to maintain social distance in this process, almost all of the world had to implement distance education practices.

In Turkey, with the occurrence of the first case on March 11, 2020, many new practices in social life have been put into effect in order to reduce the number of cases. In this manner, as a result of the research in the fields of legislations, infrastructure, human resources, contents and practices regarding distance education process, on the date of 18th March 2020, the Higher Education Digital Transformation Committee, which was established as a sub-organ of YÖK (2020b), decided that associate degree, undergraduate and graduate programs would continue with distance education.

According to the report published by YÖK (2020c) during the pandemic, while more than half of 189 universities switched to distance education within the week following this decision, 187 universities switched by March 6, 2020. In addition, OECD stated the content and quality of classes provided online during 2021. Along with this rapid transition process, the number of studies that problematize the situation of distance education in Turkey has also increased. Many quantitative studies studying opportunities higher education Institutions had or did not have relation to distance education after occurrence of the pandemic (Başaran et al., 2020), studying technical qualifications and psychological adaptations of teachers and learners (Yıldız & Seferoğlu, 2020), studying the way of conducting classes that need practical attendance (Kilincer, 2021; Özer & Üstün, 2020; Telli & Altun, 2020), studying the quality of distance education (Çelik & Perçin, 2020), studying applications through which prepared contents/classes should be conducted, studying satisfactory characteristics of above-mentioned elements for relevant parties (Karadağ & Yücel, 2020) were carried out; but, no study has been carried out directly focusing on the 'communicative dimension' which constitutes the raw material of distance education.

On the other hand, it has been observed that international studies (Gan & Sun, 2021; Islam & Habib, 2021; Klochko et al., 2021; Lassoued et al., 2020; Nazir & Khan, 2021; Roff, 2021; Van & Thi, 2021) based on higher education carried out during the pandemic, mostly focus on the dissatisfaction of university students due to the lack of technological infrastructure.

However, when the studies are examined, they were conducted throughout the pandemic period in a detailed way, it can be seen that some studies were pointing out the fact that distance education affected the interactions between teachers and learners negatively as a result of its nature (Hebebe et al., 2020; Serçemeli & Kurnaz, 2020; Tekin, 2020); neither teachers nor learners achieved to establish efficient communications and distance education did not provide the opportunity to meet other people to its participant learners (Keskin & Kaya, 2020); discussion environments established during online classes were not as qualified as discussion environments established during traditional classes, learners encountered problems both with their teachers and friends (Karatepe et al., 2020); success and satisfaction were impossible due to insufficient communication, especially during classes that need practical attendance (Ekiz, 2020; Sakarya & Zahal, 2020).

In sum, distance education entailed a communicative dissatisfaction in general. However, distance education is, first of all, a technology-mediated communication process, and as Thompson (2008, p. 53) pointed out, there is a high probability that uncertainty, defects and errors may occur in the process of producing and transmitting

information at any time. In this context, Shannon and Weaver (1964, p. 4) focused on 'Information Theory' and the *noise* factor that stands out during the journey of information from sender to the receiver; they clarified 'technical', 'semantics' and 'effectiveness' problems encountered during communicational process; and they built a foundation for technology-based information theories. On the other hand, DeFleur (1966) evaluated Information Theory in a holistic perspective by including the feedback dimension in communication and emphasized the role of feedback between the information source and the target audience. Based on this perspective, the subject of this study is the communicative barriers caused by noise and feedback experienced by faculty members in the distance education process.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

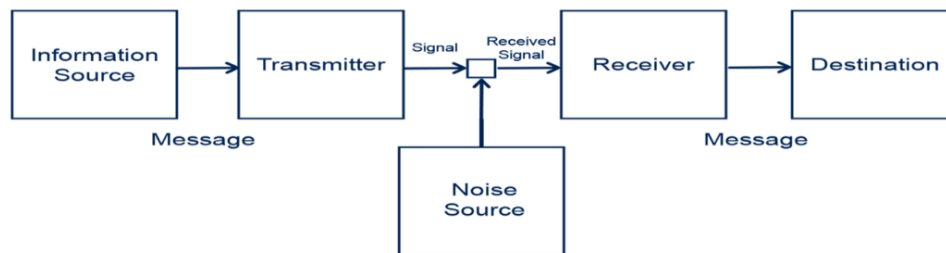
Human communication begins at birth. Communication is not only essential for human interaction but is also the only way for mankind to understand the world and society. In the most general sense, traditional communication can be defined as the direct relationship that people establish with each other through words, looks, facial expressions, or certain behavioral designs. However, with the development of communication technologies, communication turned out to be a mediated phenomenon and got rid of the need to be direct. Early as 1968, Janowitz pointed to the fact that, mass communication introduced techniques, institutions and technological devices delivering symbolic content to highly populated, heterogeneous and differentiated audiences.

Massification of communication with the development of new communication technologies accelerated mainstream communication studies in the context of mass communication. The first study that built the foundation for these studies was Shannon and Weaver's (1949) 'Information Theory' (Alemdar & Erdoğan, 2005, p. 58). This theory deeply influenced the studies conducted after itself in the context of the technical dimension of communication (Johnson & Klare, 1961).

Although the origin of the theory goes back to Ludwig Boltzmann, who established a relationship between information loss and information deprivation in 1894, Mathematician Norbert Wiener was the first person to focus on general communication and control issues (Shannon & Weaver, 1964). However, the theory was designed in the early 1950s by Shannon and Weaver, who were colleagues at Bell Telephone Company. With this model, theorists define how successful communication can take place under the roof of questions 'Which communication channel delivers the biggest number of signals?' and 'How much of the delivered signal disappears on the way from the sender to the receiver due to noise factor?' (McQuail & Windahl, 1997, p. 26). In *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* written by both Shannon and Weaver (1964, p. 8) answers were sought for how information quantity regarding communication system and how the capacity of the communication channel used during communication process could be measured, how a message could be converted in a more effective coding process, what characteristics noise factor had at the time of message delivery.

Figure 1

General Communication Model of Shannon and Weaver



Fuente: Shannon & Weaver, 1964.

According to Shannon and Weaver's Information Theory that is considered as a linear and single-way process involving delivery of coded-signal from one side to the other side, a 'post (message)' created by the 'source of information' is converted into a 'signal' by the 'transmitter'. These signals reach the 'receiver' through a 'channel'. 'The receiver', on the other hand, does the opposite of the transmitter, recreates the signal as a message and delivers it to the 'destination' expressed as the person or thing, for which the message is intended (Shannon & Weaver, 1964, pp. 33-34). But communication process does not always work in a perfect way (Li, 2007, p. 5439).

In this sense, this model underlines 3 problems that can occur and affect each other in the linear flow from the information source to the receiver: these are 'technical', 'semantic' and 'effectiveness' problems. Technical problems based on whether messages can be delivered flawlessly refers to the accuracy of delivery of a signal (audio, music, etc.) that constantly changes or delivery of content delivered to the receiver by the sender; on the other hand, semantic problems refer to a deep and complex process related to equivalence or possibility between the meaning interpreted by the receiver and the meaning intended to be delivered by the sender (Shannon & Weaver, 1964, p. 4).

One of the main reasons for the anonymity that can occur is the non-face-to-face nature of mass communication. Because technology-mediated communication is not a process based on direct and continuous feedback, as in face-to-face communication. Therefore, in mass communication, uncertainty, defects and errors may occur in the production and delivery process of Information (Thompson, 2008, p. 53). The effect of the meaning received by the recipient on its behavior is called "effectiveness problems" (Shannon & Weaver, 1964, p. 5). In short, all of these three problems that are involved in the delivery of information, which are sent from the information source and which reach the target, and that prevent the communication constitute the *noise* factor.

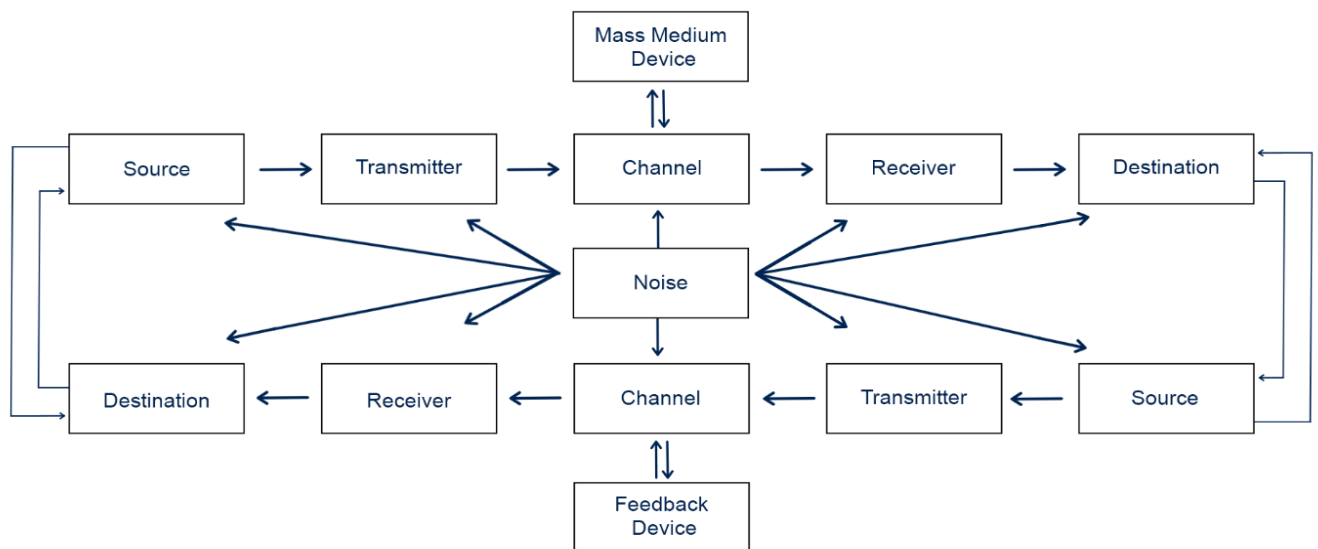
With the development of new communication technologies, time and space have ceased to be a problem, and this increased the importance of the noise factor in the model developed by Shannon and Weaver. So much so that, as the chance of choosing between messages in the communication process, in other words, as the number of information increases, the number of possible uncertainties also increases. The noise that arises in this uncertainty is the biggest obstacle standing in front of efficient communication (Alemdar & Erdoğan, 2005, pp. 66-67). In the same way, noise can also

occur if there are multiple signals at the same time. In other words, a signal may be affected by the noise factor; so, delivered message and received message (by the target) may not be the same. In this case, noise can be an obstacle in front of the realization of a efficient communication (McQuail & Windahl, 1997, p. 27).

In this sense, it is necessary not to evaluate noise only in the context of technical elements and to add many semantic noises to the flow, such as ideological preferences, censorship or information retentions (Alemdar & Erdoğan, 2005, p. 67). In other words, “Noise referred to any category of events, whether physical or behavioral, increased rather than decreased entropy (thereby reducing the accuracy of the message as understood by the destination)” (DeFleur, 2010, p. 30). Therefore, it is important to determine at what stage of communication noise factor problematized above by Shannon and Weaver comes into play in order to realize a efficient communication.

Figure 2

DeFleur's Communication Model



Fuente: DeFleur, 2010.

However, in Shannon and Weaver's communication model, which focuses on the process of delivery and receipt of a message, information has a single-way characteristic. In other words, 'feedback' to be performed by 'target' is not formulated in this model (Li, 2007, p. 5439). This deficiency was corrected by the communication model developed by DeFleur in 1970. According to DeFleur (1966), communication is bilateral: the target in Shannon and Weaver's model opens the information that reaches it as a 'message', and when this message reaches the source of information, it becomes a 'meaning'. In this way, the recipient sends the message that it converted into meaning to the information source by converting it to another meaning. Communication thus evolves from a linear process into a cyclic process. The phrase 'meaning' mentioned here is the basis of DeFleur's contribution to the Theory. Because according to DeFleur, the feedback phase allows the information source to be more effective (Kemoni, 2004). But, according to DeFleur (1966), noise factor exists at almost every stage of this

relationship. In other words, the noise factor can be activated at every moment and/or every element of the communication process (McQuail & Windahl, 1997, p. 28).

Therefore, feedback and noise elements, which constitute the two critical stages of communication, are the parts of an inseparable whole. In this context, Shannon and Weaver's Theory and DeFleur's innovation in this theory provide us with a suitable ground for evaluating distance education during the pandemic period. Likewise, the distance education process is a cyclical communication process in which the sender and receiver interact directly and directly affected by various stimuli. For that reason, the discovery of the components of the noise factor, which is an obstacle for distance education, and the role of the feedback factor in the successful communication process is the first step of a successful distance education process.

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study, which is limited to distance education in higher education, was to evaluate the communicative problems experienced in the distance education process with the pandemic within the framework of Shannon and Weaver's Information Theory and DeFleur's communication model. In this sense, this study focused on the following questions:

RQ1. What are the noise factors affecting the quality of education during the distance education process?

RQ2. How important is the feedback in terms of information source in the distance education process?

4. METHODOLOGY

In this section, the methods and procedures used in conducting the study are described.

4.1. General Design

The phenomenology research design was used in this study on the determination of factors that disrupt quality standards due to 'noise' and 'feedback' factors in online distance education carried out in higher education institutions during COVID-19 pandemic. This research design makes a holistic depiction by focusing on the identification of common characteristics of several people's experiences concerning a certain event and collecting phenomenon-related data from them (Creswell, 2016, p. 77). It aims to focus on the phenomenon, to combine it with the question of 'how' (how to perceive, remember, understand) and to collect in-depth data from people. Collecting data in this way is only possible by in-depth interviewing people, who have directly experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2014, p. 104). Phenomenology provides convenience to researchers in terms of how phenomena/events are perceived by actors (Lester, 1999) while researching phenomena/events that we already are aware of but we do not have in-depth information about (Bevan, 2014).

4.2. Target Population and Sample of the Study

Target population of the study is made up of lecturers who provided online distance education even before COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were from ten different faculties. Participants were determined as sixteen lecturers consisting of 1 lecturer from each *Faculty of Education, Dentistry, Nursing, Tourism, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Agriculture, Sport Sciences*, 2 each lecturer from the *Faculty of Applied Sciences, Communication, Engineering* and 3 lecturers working in a *Higher Education Institution*. Snowball technique is adopted to reach the participants. After an interview with the first lecturer, who met the criteria for inclusion in the above-mentioned target population of the study, he was requested to refer us to another lecturer, who fulfills the criteria. Each participant, who participated in the study in this way, mentioned a name and data reached satisfactory levels after the 16th person. Because, after the 16th person, almost all of the answers given in return for semi-structured interview questions were similar. In addition, this study was limited not only to distance education lecturers in higher education institutions during the pandemic but also during past periods. The fact that participants have mastered the concept and practice of distance education allows them to determine differences and similarities between online distance education performed during the pandemic and the quality of distance education performed in past periods.

4.3. Data Collection

In this study, an in-depth interview technique was used to explore the elements affecting the quality of distance education that lies in the minds of distance education lecturers before and after the pandemic. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview form was organized so that it would allow us to look at the problem from a holistic perspective. Questions created according to the semi-structured form technique posed to the sample group were designed according to Shannon and Weaver's Information Model based on the "noise" element and DeFleur's Communication Model, which included the 'feedback' factor in this model. Opinions regarding the interview form were obtained from 3 experts working in the University's Distance Education Application and Research Center and providing distance education. In line with the suggestions of all 3 experts, some questions were revised. After the necessary arrangements were made, a pilot interview was conducted with 3 lecturers giving distance education in order to determine whether there were any questions that were not clear with the final version of the interview form. Finally, the interviews with the participants were carried out with the following 10 questions:

1. What are your thoughts for the application of live lessons in distance education?
2. Which mass media (phone, tablet, computer, television) do you use in the live lesson application? Are there any problems you encounter? Why?
3. Do you encounter problems arising from the application you used while performing your presentations and lectures? What kind of problem are you encountering? Were you encountering problems before the pandemic?
4. Where do you have your lessons (home, school, cafe, library, etc.)? Where were you doing before the pandemic?

5. How do you ensure your adaptation during the course you perform? Are there any factors that affect your adaptation?
6. What do you pay attention to while preparing your course documents/presentations/lectures?
7. How is your adaptation with your students during the live lessons?
8. Do you ever cancel your classes at any time and for any reason? Why?
9. If the pandemic conditions disappear, what do you think about continuing education with distance education method? Why?
10. Are there any issues affecting your concentration while teaching distantly? If so, what are they?

Besides, the interviews with each participant lasted an average of 25 minutes. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom, Microsoft Teams and telephone due to the pandemic conditions.

4.4. Ethical Principles

Before the start of the interviews, interview questions were submitted to the Social and Humanities Scientific Studies And Publication Ethics Board of University and necessary approval was obtained to conduct the interviews. Moreover, each participant was informed about the fact that information about the purpose, name and institution of the study would not be mentioned in the study, they could quit the interview at any time, and if requested, results of the study would be delivered to them. Finally, participants were informed that the interview would be recorded (audio/video) and necessary permits were obtained.

4.5. Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure the validity of the research, a literature review was conducted, firstly. Afterwards, a conceptual framework on the subject was created by taking the expert opinions of 2 lecturers working in communication sciences and educational sciences, and an interview form was developed in this direction. Then, based on the principles of research ethics, the participants were determined with the snowball sampling method, which would contribute to the best way of revealing, understanding and interpreting the researched phenomenon (Palys, 2008). A "consent form" was taken from each participant before the interview with the participants. After the data collection process carried out by the researchers from an objective point of view, the interviews were transcribed without adding or deleting any words. At the end of this stage, the themes were determined. The data were coded by two independent researchers and the Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to determine the inter-rater reliability of the coded themes. According to Kappa analysis, the consistency level between two coders is 0.812 and since this value is between 0.81 and 1.0 the consistency was "almost perfect" (Landis & Koch, 1977, p. 165). In addition, in order to increase external reliability, all stages of the research were subject to reliability review by an external expert (Gunbayi, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.6. Data Analysis

Data obtained at the end of interviews were analyzed by 'thematic (categorical) analysis', one of the types of content analysis. In this context, data obtained at the end of interviews with the participants are themed according to the noise and feedback factor, which create obstacles for effective communication. All conversations that took place during the interviews and that were outside the scope of the study were first written on the interview form. These written data were then transferred to the NVivo 10 program, which provides the researcher with convenience in creating categories related to the subject of the research. In conclusion, it can be told that twelve main themes were installed in the program.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Technical infrastructure

Technical Infrastructure problems constitute a common problem for all participants. Because although almost all of the lecturers did not experience problems caused by the infrastructure of the University, all of the participants pointed out the fact that internet infrastructure of the message-receiver students prevented effective communication. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

Technological infrastructure deficiencies undermine the success of distance education. When the system is interrupted, we might be face to face with problems such as not being able to gather students again or not being able to find each student. Once the system is interrupted, it becomes very difficult to maintain present motivation. (P3)

5.2. External stimuli

The decision taken by the University envisages that classes shall be held in the rooms of the lecturers at the University. But this has made all lecturers open to external stimuli. Therefore, almost all participants agree that external stimuli, which can be called raw noise, negatively affect their concentration. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

I've been locking my door lately. Other lecturers naturally do not know when I have classes; that is why I need to hang notice papers on my door telling "Class is on". But still, some lecturers do not notice those papers. As a natural result of this, they interrupt the class. (P1)

When the counter party's camera is on, some other issues arise from time to time and we can hear the conversations between other family members in the background. This negatively affects our concentration. (P11)

5.3. Uploading classes into the program used

It is found that, the fact that classes have to be recorded by the lecturers creates extra stress on lecturers. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

I once forgot to record a class. I just turned on the computer and recorded the same class once again. Yes, we sometimes have such troubles. And, when you do this, there are not any students listening to you. It was pure torture. (P2)

Because official supervisor says: "You have to divide each hour into three sub-sections". Official supervisor also says "Each 20-minute-long session shall be equivalent to 1 class hour.". But consider this: sometimes I forget to record the class. What am I going to do? Should I want the official supervisor to take the money back from me? I just forget it. There is nothing I can do about it! (P3)

5.4. Security issues

Conducting classes over the internet also brings some security problems. Some of the participants' opinions on this security issue are as follows:

Teams is normally a social media program. I do not think it is secure. Because it is not designed for online classes. It has a magazine-like structure like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which recently led to rapid growth in social media usage. Teams is not secure, because students have the opportunity to cheat during exams. (P8)

5.5. Students' cameras being turned off

The fact that lecturers cannot see students physically in front of them makes feedback almost impossible, so it directly affects their performance. Some of the participants' opinions about students' cameras being turned off are as follows:

We cannot oblige every student to turn on the camera. Sometimes students attend the class, but their cameras are off. I have no idea whether he/she understands what I tell... Or, does he/she play with his/her phone when I am conducting the class? Is he/she really listening to me? Since I have no answers to these questions, these topics affect both my performance and gainings of the student from the class. (P9)

5.6. Legislation

According to the decision taken by the University, one class hour is set at 20 minutes and lecturers are asked to conduct classes in 3 x 20-minute-long sessions on the designated day and time. Some of the participants oppose the necessity of distance education to be carried out on the designated day and time due to its nature; all of the participants stated that these sessions put a psychological pressure on them. The said decision, on the one hand, affected the correct delivery of messages that lecturers wanted to transmit to their students, while on the other hand, lecturers' attempt to place classes in pre-defined periods created a block in front of the feedback. Participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

I do not think the arrangement of 20-minute-long sessions is a good idea. It is not possible to conduct healthy classes in this way. I mean, (with this rule) 3 class hours is supposed to be completed in 45 minutes. In other words, I do not think it is correct to conduct classes by dividing them into 20-minute-long sessions. (P4)

5.7. Lack of eye contact

All participants stated that distance education process makes eye contact almost impossible, which is an obstacle to create desired meaning and effect. Almost all participants agree that eye contact is the building block of feedback. Participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

I should have eye contact with my students; I should appeal to their senses. There is no eye contact in distance education, which, you know, is extremely important in communication. When there is eye contact, you communicate better. (P6)

It's different to see something as an image in a virtual environment than to see it live. The feeling of going to an empty classroom and instructing in that empty classroom is no different. Actually, this is a situation that makes an academician mad. (P16)

5.8. Feedback

When it comes to effectiveness, all participants complain about the lack of feedback in distance education. In this sense, the fact that feedback in distance education is very low is the primary reason why distance education shall never replace traditional face-to-face education according to lecturers. Some of the participants' opinions on the lack of feedback in distance education are as follows:

Unfortunately, there is a lack of motivation for classes because of the lack of interaction. Especially during the 2nd and 3rd sessions. In the first session, you just sit there with excitement and start instructing, but after a while, it becomes very monotonous. You just talk, talk ... how far will that go on like this? (P1)

In normal times, when you see a student approving what you say with his/her head during face-to-face classes, it is a feedback. Or, just some act or any sound made by students is feedback. But in this case, we do not have such chances of receiving feedback. (P5)

5.9. Participation rate

All participants stated that participation in classes is incomparably low compared to face-to-face education, so this situation significantly reduced feedback and negatively affected participants' own motivation. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

That's the biggest problem we have: Participation in classes. 6-7 or 8 people attend classes, where we are supposed to be around 80 in total. If you ask the student (why he/she does not attend classes), maybe he/she is going to tell you that he/she watches the videos later. Okay! But there are cases, where I need to establish interactions. (P1)

5.10. Applicability of practice-based classes

Lecturers working in Practice-Based Faculties have expressed the inapplicability of distance education in this regard when it comes to practice-based classes. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

It's really a troubling process for those with practice-based lab classes. It is a problematic condition both for the lecturer and for the student attending the class. (P16)

There are classes which we call [Compulsory Common Classes] Turkish Language, History Of Revolutions, Foreign Language, perhaps even Computer Use. (P10)

5.11. Ability of lecturers to use applications and technologies

All participants, who think that there is a rapid transition to distance education, were born before 1980. In other words, they are digital immigrants. This has played a direct role in their adoption of distance education. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

I would not experience problems with the Microsoft Teams, which I tried before; but I'm very new to this program. When you consider us in terms of our generations, (I can say that) we are digital immigrants. (P4)

I do not use most of the functions of the program I am using at the moment. It can be 3 or a maximum of 4 or 5 functions, but I do not use more. I have to admit, I do not know. But, if we can use technology very well if students participate actively... I think distance education can be very effective. (P5)

5.12. Lack of training on distance education

As mentioned above, although participants had provided distance education before, rapid and intensive transition into distance education with the pandemic caught some participants off guard. Some of the participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

This is one of the most talked-about topics. Since we already entered a very fast process in terms of practice-based education, our preparations were not at sufficient levels. (P13)

We often have problems. Our managers are directly telling us which program we should use; without even training us for it. Okay, we are all professors but we are very far away from this program. (P14)

6. DISCUSSION

In this study, regarding the communicative problems experienced by the lecturers working at a university located in the south of Turkey during the distance education process in which they were heavily involved with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is aimed to reveal the "noise" factor, which forms the basis of Shannon and Weaver's Information Theory, and the "feedback" factor, which mediates DeFleur's revision of the theory. Results showed that "noise" and "feedback" factors experienced by all

lecturers combined under twelve themes. In other words, it is observed that problems experienced by lecturers in distance education process correspond to the components, which are created by *Distance Education Working Group* affiliated to Presidency of the Higher Education Council of the Republic of Turkey (2020d) and which should be taken into account for a qualified distance education system.

Shannon and Weaver (1964) noted that determining at what stage noise factor that occurs in the communication process is activated is extremely important to eliminate communication barriers and to ensure that communication is effective. The basic element for an effective communication process in Information Theory put forth by Shannon and Weaver, which constitute the theoretical infrastructure of the study, is that the message encoded by the source, that is, the content reaches its target without any disruptions (noise) (Li, 2007, p. 5439). However, distance education is open to many problems due to its nature. In this sense, technical problems (Berge & Muilenburg, 2001) and external stimuli, which are one of the most encountered problems in the distance education process, have emerged as the common problem of the lecturers.

Therefore, similar to previous studies, regarding infrastructure-related technical problems (Başaran et al., 2020; Mailizar et al., 2020; Özüdoğru, 2021) that may arise during the transfer of content (message) sent to students (target) by lecturers (source) and noise factors caused by external stimuli (Burch, 2001; Kara & Yıldırım, 2022; Razkane et al., 2022; Şahin, 2021) experienced in this process came to the fore as common problems that prevent all participants from communicating effectively. In other words, commitment of distance education to strength and quality of technical infrastructure during the pandemic negatively affected the quality of the education provided. Because students' internet infrastructures negatively affect the quality of distance education.

Feedback, as with all mass communication processes, is the only way for the lecturer to understand the efficiency of distance education (Attri, 2012) during the pandemic process and whether the communication is happening correctly. It is observed that the 'legislations', 'students' cameras being turned off', 'lack of eye contact' and failure to adequately meet the feedback factor that is directly related to 'participation rate' in classes during distance education led to a decrease in the motivation and productivity of the lecturers. At this point, the importance of feedback that DeFleur focuses on in his communication model becomes evident. According to DeFleur (1966), feedback in the communication process positively affects the communicational motivation of the information source. But, participants in the study agree that the above-mentioned elements, each of which corresponds to noise separately and is directly related to feedback, negatively affect their work satisfaction.

In this sense, University legislation appears to be the main factor causing the lowest level of feedback and turns into a noise factor that creates stress on lecturers. One of the most important articles of the legislation is that the lessons should be held in the form of "3 sessions of 20 minutes each" and each session must be recorded every 20 minutes. However, this and similar obstacles/impositions about time are an element that negatively affects the learning process (Dabaj & Yetkin, 2011). As a matter of fact,

as in the study of O'Doherty et al. (2018), the restriction of course durations in distance education to a certain period forces the lecturers to be fast. Adding the stress of not forgetting to record each session separately to this situation causes a non-interactive lesson process with the lowest level of feedback, reducing the efficiency of the education.

On the other hand, again, looking at the findings, 'uploading classes' as video records prevents a student from attending live classes. Therefore, a student, who watches classes that he or she does not follow live as a video recording, is not able to interact or establish interactions with the lecturer; and, in this sense, does not meet the feedback expectations of the lecturer. Therefore, University's decision to conduct courses in the form of 20-minute-long sessions leads to classes, in which only the lecturer can speak due to time constraints, and there are little or no interactions at all. In addition, similar to previous studies (Fitzgerald et al., 2022; Kara & Yıldırım, 2022; Stewart & Lowenthal, 2022; Şahin et al., 2022) the lack of an obligation for turned on cameras for students creates concerns for lecturers about whether the content of the class reaches students. Distance education process, where there is no eye-to-eye contact due to turned off cameras, is one of the biggest reasons why lecturers cannot get feedback from their students.

At this point, the importance of eye contact in education emerges. Because the lack of eye contact, which is an indispensable element of face-to-face communication, is a basic element that causes a loss of motivation for the students (Attri, 2012) as well as for the lecturers (Galusha, 1998). As a matter of fact, the lack of eye contact in the distance education process, similar to previous studies, worried all lecturers about whether the students understood the message correctly or whether they were listening to themselves (Isman & Altınay; 2005; Özüdoğru, 2021; Şahin et al., 2022; Topuz et al., 2021). Because participants cannot understand whether content of classes they create reaches the students due to the fact that they cannot see their students' eyes, gestures and facial expressions. This causes lecturers to be unable to evaluate the harmony of the message between themselves and the recipient.

The importance of eye-to-eye contact in education becomes more evident when it comes to practical lessons. Because, with the pandemic, it has been a matter of concern how the applied courses, especially in the previous periods, will be carried out with distance education. In this sense, as in studies dealing with this issue at different levels such as secondary education and undergraduate education (Hebebcı et al., 2020; Karatepe et al., 2020; Karcıoğlu et al., 2022) all of the participants who gave applied courses expressed their concerns on this issue. In addition, the lack of lecturers' ability to use technology in distance education (Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Fitzgerald et al., 2022; Leontyeva, 2018; Mailizar et al., 2020; Şahin et al., 2022) and security concerns (Keskin & Şentürk, 2021; Zincirli, 2021) have turned into an additional source of stress on lecturers.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Since all noise-creating factors that are mostly related to infrastructure and legislative regulations, that also emerged as the themes of this research, made feedback almost

impossible, all participants felt psychological and physiological solitude and this emotion negatively effected their job satisfaction. In this sense, it is concluded that the noise factor theorized by Shannon and Weaver under the scope of the Information Model and the feedback factor emphasized by DeFleur evoke the need for 'expected feedback in communication' on the information source according to our definition.

Unlike previous studies, this study also revealed the importance of legislation prepared by the universities. In this context, it is obvious that university administrations creating legislation that offers more flexibility to lecturers will play a positive role on the work satisfaction and stress levels of the lecturers. Thereby, it is recommended to conduct workshops with lecturers teaching at universities that have institutionalized distance education, and to conduct surveys with closed-ended questions based on legislation and to carry out studies that receive academic feedback.

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