Chapter 12

Online Education and Student Satisfaction:
Insight From Student Perceptions Towards Online Education Quality

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of online education cannot be accepted as new, but the immediate change from an in-class environment to an online environment is new because of COVID-19 restrictions. The aim of the study is whether students are satisfied with online education during the COVID-19 period to determine the factors that affect students' satisfaction with online education during the period and to find service quality gaps and students' satisfaction based on the gap model. As higher education institutions try to cope with a competitive advantage and maintain service quality, feedback from students is valuable to increase the effectiveness of educational plans and implement future intentions. Students are aware that unusual circumstances bring both advantages and disadvantages. Not being present in the class environment is counted as both a positive and negative thing by students. Overall, students feel satisfied with online education during the lockdown period.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, China announced the very first Covid-19 cases. Then, the World Health Organization informed people Covid-19 is a global pandemic rather than an epidemic. Almost every person in every part of the world has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The unique global experience which is the Covid-19 disaster has created remarkable events on social and individual levels so it can be counted as an existential experience (Blustein & Guarino, 2020). In order to slow down and prevent the Covid-19 virus from spreading, many countries started to apply strict rules such as regulations to maintain social

distance and/or complete lockdown. There were unexpected and huge shifts from the outside to the home. Implementation to stop the viral outbreak involved working from home, closing many institutions such as schools, universities, malls, sports centers, and stores, and/or providing flexible working hours. Online education in Turkish universities was seen as an alternative to traditional learning to sustain education during restriction periods.

The online education system cannot be considered as a new phenomenon. Before the pandemic period, higher education institutions have been willing to develop online education programs because these programs fascinated more students at a lower cost compared to traditional education systems (Green, 2010). Students can reach their courses without being present physically on campuses so they can spend less time and money. Also, they can sustain their work schedule while trying to achieve education goals. However, immediately shifting from an in-class environment to an online environment is not a usual circumstance. Thus, online education during the pandemic period has brought new issues to be handled by all parties including professors, students, and universities. Shifting from school and university environments to homes leads to some problems for students such as technological issues, psychological issues, lack of focus while studying, and lack of interaction with peers or teachers (Kapasia et al.,2020). On the other side, some advantages educated at home are safe, the effectiveness of time and cost, and convenience (Maqableh & Alia, 2021 & Fatani, 2020). In the literature, some researchers find out that students' satisfaction is higher compared to face-to-face learning during the Covid-19 period (Chen et al., 2020). Others claim that students are not satisfied with online learning (Latip et al.,2020, & Cheon et al., 2020). Thus, there is no consensus in the literature.

The research questions of this study are listed below;

Q1: How did the online education system during the Covid-19 period affects students' satisfaction level?
Q2: What were the main gaps affecting student satisfaction with online education during the Covid-19 period?

The main purposes of the study are whether students are satisfied with online education during the Covid-19 period, and to determine the factors that affect students' satisfaction with online education during the period. Also, the research will try to solve problems students are facing in the online education period. Understanding these factors that affect student satisfaction in online education will be useful in order to continue online education programs in the future. Education providers such as universities and colleges would position themselves and differentiate from their competitors. These institutions also would see the result of this study and might correct their lacking point. Used platforms in universities would be aware of their service quality based on the students answers. The unique character of this study would contribute to service marketing and students satisfaction in education literature.

BACKGROUND

Online Education

Information and communication technologies allow for maintaining lectures in a distance environment among students and professors through online courses. (Harsasi & Sutawijaya, 2018). Online education means sustaining education activities in an online environment through web or computer networks

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