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A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNICATION EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹

¹ Appreciation

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This study includes the results of the students who studies in the field of Communication Studies.

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Abstract

In this study, with the aim of revealing the effects of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic process on communication education, the effects of the pandemic on students studying in the field of communication and academics with a professional academic career in this field were examined. In the research, which reveals the opinions and perceptions of people based on their own experiences and experiences in an in-depth manner, qualitative research method was used by conducting semi-structured interviews, and the collected data were analysed through content analysis. In the study, 10 academicians working in the faculties of communication of state or foundation universities in different regions and provinces in Türkiye and 10 students studying in the autumn and spring semesters of the 2022-2023 academic year were selected and included in the study on a voluntary basis. As a result, it is reported that honesty and clear expression competence are important for the establishment of an effective inter-mass communication process in extraordinary crisis periods such as COVID-19, and that it is a necessity to prioritise respect and honesty in communication education and to make arrangements that include scientific and social change transformation.

Keywords: COVID-19, communication education, high education

COVID-19 SALGINI SÜRECİ SONRASINDA YÜKSEKÖĞRETİMDE İLETİŞİM EĞİTİMİNİN UĞRADIĞI DÖNÜŞÜM ÜZERİNE NİTELİKSEL BİR İNCELEME

Özet

Bu çalışmada koronavirüs COVID-19 salgın süreci ve sonrasında iletişim eğitimi üzerine etkilerinin ortaya konulması amaçlanarak salgının, iletişim alanında öğrenim gören lisans öğrencileri ve bu alanda mesleki akademik kariyeri olan akademisyenler üzerinde etkileri incelenmiştir. Derinlemesine bir biçimde kişilerin kendi deneyim ve yaşantılarından yola çıkılarak görüşlerini ve algılarını ortaya koyan araştırmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilerek nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış, toplanan veriler içerik analizi yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmaya, Türkiye'de farklı bölge ve illerde devlet veya vakıf üniversitelerinin İletişim Fakültelerinde görev yapan 10 akademisyen, 2022-2023 Eğitim ve Öğretim yılının güz ve bahar döneminde eğitim gören 10 lisans öğrencisi gönüllülük ilkesine göre seçilerek dahil edilmiştir. Çalışmada ortaya çıkan ana temalar iletişim bilimine yönelim, iletişim araçlarının kullanımı, salgın döneminde iletişim fakültesinde öğrenci olmak, yeterlilikler, iletişim eğitimi ve toplumsal yaşamda COVID-19 salgını deneyimleri olmaktadır. Katılımcıların salgında duydukları ilk duygularının korku, kaygı ve endişe olduğu dikkati çekerken, medyanın toplumu doğrudan etkileme gücüne sahip olduğunu vurgulamaları da önem arz etmektedir. Sonuç olarak COVID-19 gibi olağandışı kriz dönemlerinde kitlelerarası etkili bir iletişim sürecinin kurulması için dürüstlük ve net ifade etme yeterliliğinin önemli olduğu, iletişim eğitiminde saygı ve dürüstlüğün ön planda tutulması ve bilimsel, toplumsal değişim dönüşüm içeren düzenlemelerin yapılması bir gereklilik olduğu görüşleri bildirilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: COVID-19, iletişim eğitimi, yükseköğretim

Ethical Declaration

In this study, all the rules specified in the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions" were followed. None of the actions specified under the second section of the Directive, "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", have been carried out. Ethics committee approval information Name of the ethics committee = Ege University Social Sciences and Humanities Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee Date of ethics assessment decision = 30.06.2021 Ethics assessment document number number = 08/02 Protocol No: 1014

INTRODUCTION

Modern society has experienced a pandemic for the first time caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) virus, which has been a major threat to humanity at various times in the world history. This virüs that has been emerged in China, has instilled feelings of helplessness and fear of death throughout the world. According to Bauman, the concept of death is the denial of everything represented by modernity and the dominance of reason. Modernity, through advancing medical science, turns mortality into a construction project and accepts it as a 'treatable disease' (Bauman, 2012: 166). However, the COVID-19 virus, which emerged for the first time and for which a treatment has not yet been developed, has necessitated a global struggle. One aspect of this struggle is related to the treatment of the disease and the elimination of its deadly effects, while the other aspect involves the continuation of social life in areas such as education, economy, communication, trade, etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented challenges in global economies due to the restrictions because it has brought to public health systems, education, and work life (Busch, 2022: 414; Dhawan, 2020: 8). Governments have implemented social distances rules in various areas of society through these restrictions by enforcing control measures. This process has caused sudden changes in social life, education, and work life by prompting many countries to develop different methods to combat the pandemic in these areas. For the first time in modern world history, people from all over the world have had to work from home and pursue education virtually almost every day by overcoming many new technological challenges that they were not prepared before (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai & Bendz, 2020: 429). The method of working and learning from home has increasingly has been preferred in terms of both work and education policies due to its potential for cost savings; on the other hand this situation is also being considered as a way to adapt to possible future crises such as global pandemics in future scenarios. However, this innovative method of working and learning presents new challenges to areas that suddenly has had to perform remote learning and working, directly impacting both work and education life. While initially welcomed, remote work and distance learning raise many issues for workers regarding communication, socialization, collaboration, and technology implementation (Raišienė, Rapuano, Varkulevičiūtė and Stachová, 2020: 5332). The remote working format has brought digital communication tools to the forefront, and technology has been heavily used during this period since communication is at the center of life. Communication is extremely important for speaking, directing, and understanding (Kırık, Altıntaş, Özkoçak & Darıcı, 2020: 47). The challenges experienced in various fields such as economics, politics, sociology, and psychology on a global scale due to the pandemic have also impacted the process of remote education and work, highlighting the importance of the technologies people use to establish healthy communication.

When looked at the literature, it is observed that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students have been investigated in various fields such as education sciences, health sciences, political sciences, and sports sciences. In media studies, examinations have predominantly focused on misinformation, disinformation, questioning the national and international news

transmission regarding the pandemic, information exchange on social media, or the rapid dissemination of fake news (Aydın, 2020; Çelik, 2020). Studies have also examined the impact of discrimination faced by the elderly, who are more exposed to restrictions during the pandemic, on social media (Tuna Uysal & Tan Eren, 2020), or their information-seeking and evaluation through national projects (Binark, Arun, Özsoy, Kandemir & Şahinkay, 2020). Generally, due to the unexpected and rapid development of the pandemic, no evaluation has been made regarding students' adaptation to the requirements and protocols of distance education (Iyer, Aziz & Ojcius, 2020). In the field of communication, there have been no studies found in national and international literature that convey the views and expectations of students studying in this field and academics working in this field regarding the impact of the pandemic on social life, education, and employment. It is believed that the data to be obtained from the research will be crucial in determining strategies and roadmaps for education and work life in the context of COVID-19 or future pandemics.

Based on the mentioned reasons below, the research aims to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perspectives of those providing and receiving education in the field of communication and the transformation in work life due to the coronavirus has been analyzed. The study also focuses on the role of motivation in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic and explores ways to work efficiently from home and the importance of digital communication for educational institutions and strategies that should be followed for healthy communication in education-teaching have been highlighted in the context of national and international literature.

The study aims to examine the impact of the global pandemic known as the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the views of the students studying communication in higher education and academics responsible for education in this field. Additionally, the study aims to contribute to measures and regulations aimed at ensuring full participation in education and teaching during possible crisis periods such as future pandemics or disasters. It also aims to contribute to the existing literature in the field by providing insights and recommendations based on the perspectives of students and academics in the communication field.

METHOD

The data for the research, which will be subjected to qualitative analysis, were obtained from a total of 20 participants, consisting of 10 faculty members teaching in the faculty of communication during the Spring and Fall semesters of 2022-2023, and 10 students in the field of communication and media education.

Research Design, Participants and Sample

In the research, a nested single-case design of the qualitative research type known as a case study has been utilized. The typical case sample of the research comprises communication faculties in both state and foundation universities. The research includes voluntary participation from faculty members and students within the communication faculties and investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in the field of communication based on the

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perspectives of both educators and learners. For this purpose, a qualitative research method has been used. The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis techniques. Structured interviews with participants were conducted by asking predetermined questions, formulated by researchers and finalized with input from experts in the field. The questions were presented to the interviewees in the same order and this situation allows them the opportunity to respond to the questions with the depth they desired. The research findings, derived from participants' perspectives, contribute significantly and deeply to potential adjustments in communication education. Demographic information of the participants and details regarding their communication usage during the pandemic are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 (*Appendix 1-2*).

As seen in Table 1 (*Appendix 1*), student's participants are in the age range of 18-24, with 4 of them being female, 10 participants totally. With the exception of S10 (Ege University), all participants are studying at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (ÇOMÜ). S1-S5-S7 are at the first-year level, while S1-S6 and S10 are at the fourth-year level in the Faculty of Communication. When asked about their faculty and program preferences, their views on their interest in the field and their belief in acquiring effective communication skills stand out (S1-S3-S5-S8-S9-S10), while candidates such as those interested in TV programming (S7), creativity (S4), and expecting uniqueness and development of effective communication skills in the faculty of communication (S2) are also notable. Additionally, it is worth noting that all participants frequently use smartphones and computers to communicate with family and friends and the social media platforms which they prefer are Instagram, Whatsapp, and Twitter, mainly for keeping up with news, acquiring information, staying in touch, and accessing news quickly, as well as for environments that allow video chat with their loved ones. According to career goals, the aim at having an academic career (S6-S8-S10) and becoming a professional speaker (S2-S5-S7-S8) are prominent.

Upon examining the demographic information of the academics in Table 2 (*Appendix 2*), which includes 6 females aged between 30 and 48, it is noteworthy that the other academics work at state universities, except for 3 (A-4-A6-A10). Their professional seniority ranges from 4 to 21 years, and it is observed that they teach courses focusing on television, cinema, scriptwriting, documentary, photography, digital editing, and Television Production Design. It has been determined that A2-A3-A5- A7-A8 haven't conducted practical application courses in the last year. The most frequently used communication tools by all academics are smartphones, computers, and tablets. They have reported that they prefer online platforms such as Whatsapp, Instagram, and Twitter to keep up with the agenda and developments and to follow news quickly. Academics such as A6, in addition to following the news and communicating, use OTT, Teams, and Moodle for workflow purposes, while participants such as A3 frequently follow Instagram and Twitter for human behaviors and attitudes.

Ethical Approvals of the Research

In this study, all rules that have been stipulated in the "Regulation on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions" has been obeyed. None of the actions

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listed under the second section of the regulation titled "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" have been performed. The ethical committee approval information is as follows:

The name of the ethics committee conducting the ethical evaluation is the "Ege University Committee on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Social and Humanities Sciences."

The date of the ethical evaluation decision= 30.06.2021

The ethical evaluation document number= 08/02 Protokol No: 1014

Data Collection Tool

In the research, to ensure that the participants are well-informed to avoid any difficulties during the implementation of the demographic information form in case they have detailed information. The general information form has included questions which have aimed at determining variables such as age, gender, field of study, year of graduation, sector experience, preferred communication device, etc. After completing the demographic information form of the participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by asking questions which were prepared by the researchers and finalized based on the opinions of three expert faculty members in the field of communication and a media practitioner and these questions were asked sequentially during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually either face-to-face, over the phone, or via Zoom with audio-video recording (with the participant's permission). The average duration of the interviews ranged from 20 to 50 minutes. If the participants gave the permission, both audio and online recordings were taken, and simultaneous notes were recorded during the interview sessions.

Data Analysis

The systematic examination and organization of interview transcripts, field notes, and other data to access the findings of a research study is referred as data analysis. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this study, data analysis was based on the content analysis technique consisting of six steps as articulated by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The analysis of the data was conducted with an inductive approach, and descriptive summaries of the semi-structured interview forms and voice recordings obtained during individual interviews were made. In the analysis of the demographic information of students and academics, as well as the transcripts of the interviews, a code name was assigned to each participant in accordance with ethical principles, and was ensured that the participants' views were not identified in any descriptive manner in terms of confidentiality and ethics. For students, participants were coded as S1, S2, S3S10, while members of faculty of communication were coded as A1, A2, A3....A10, indicating their participation in the study.

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When the descriptive data analysis of the voice recordings was conducted, it was determined that there were 43 pages and 1400 lines for students and 72 pages and 2415 lines for academics. In order to ensure credibility and validity in reaching themes and main themes from codes through content analysis, the data were consistently subjected to qualitative research method and interview technique, and direct quotes from participants' views were included. The exact expressions were reflected in the descriptive index form without any change in words, sound, or expression, and these expressions were reflected in the findings as quotations.

The mentioned limitations are hoped to guide future scientific research in this area and to prevent encountering the same problems, it is recommended to keep the time planning broad and to take measures to ensure that the students to be interviewed come from a wide range of communication education backgrounds.

The research findings of this study were obtained through in-depth interviews, which allowed for open-ended questions to be asked, listened to, recorded, and analyzed and that enable communication educators and practitioners to share their perspectives. However, the intense workload of educators has brought with it the risk of keeping the interviews shorter than desired and has constituted a major limitation of the study. This workload resulted in declining interview requests for many educators, and leads to the inclusion of perspectives from communication educators in only four cities, rather than representing a broader national spectrum. Another limitation arose from the fact that the views of students in communication were solely from those studying in the Radio, Television, and Cinema Department. Factors such as course intensity, refusal of interview requests, and time constraints contributed to this situation and haven't been included in perspectives from students in fields such as journalism, public relations, advertising, new media, visual communication, and design. It is hoped that these limitations will serve as guidance for future scientific research in this area, and in order to avoid encountering the same issues, it is recommended to keep the timeline broad and take measures to ensure that the students to be interviewed represent a wide range of communication education backgrounds.

Results

In this study, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the field of communication was examined based on the perspectives of communication students and educators responsible for education in the field. Data collected through semi-structured interviews and demographic information, along with open-ended questions, were subjected to content analysis to derive main and sub-themes. The findings were described in main and sub-themes based on the views of faculty of communication students and educators regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant perspectives on a total of 6 main themes and 11 sub-themes were transformed into findings, which are presented in detail in Figure 1 on the following page.

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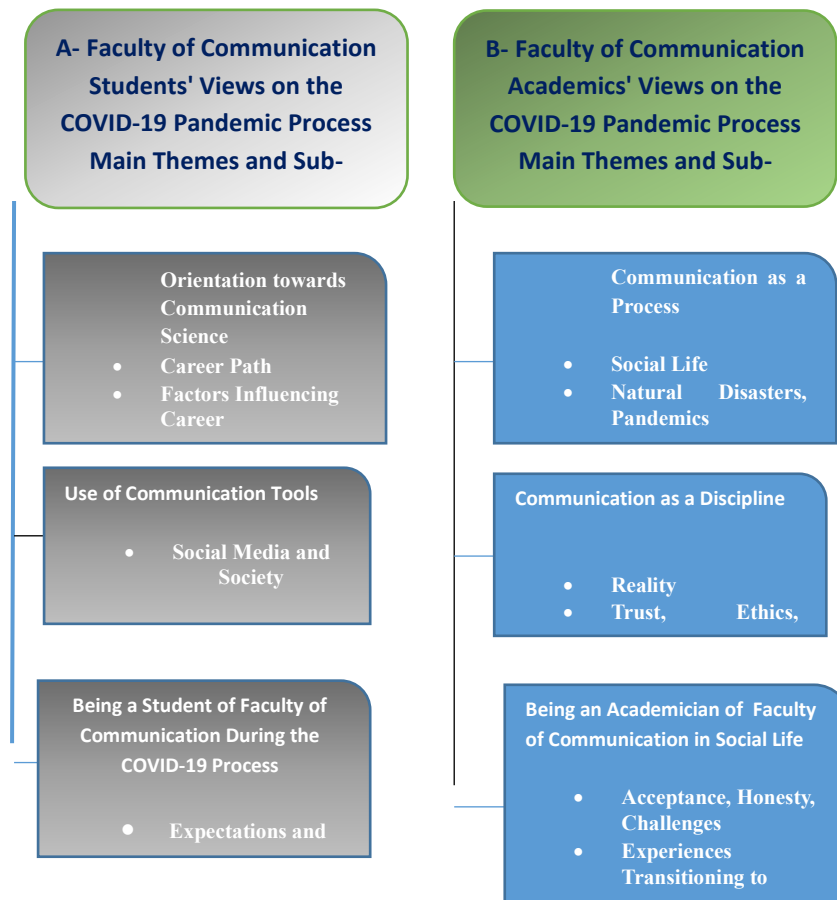


Figure 1: Main Themes and Sub-Themes Reached Through Data Analysis

As seen in Figure 1, Taking into consideration the project's objectives, research questions, and rationale, a data collection interview protocol was developed within the scientific methodology. This involved informing participants, providing explanations in both written and oral forms regarding the research rationale and process, establishing a sample based on voluntary participation in accordance with ethical principles, conducting interviews, and subsequently reaching 2 domains, 6 main themes, and 11 sub-themes through data documentation, analysis, validity, and reliability procedures. Based on the opinions of students and academicians, the main themes and sub-themes in each field are listed below, and participant opinions related to these themes and sub-themes are directly quoted in the following findings section.

The perspectives of students at the Faculty of Communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic process are categorized into three main themes: "**Orientation towards Communication Science,**" "**Use of Communication Tools,**" and "**Being a Student at the Faculty of Communication during the COVID-19 Period**". The theme of orientation towards communication science consists of sub-themes: "Career Process" and "Factors

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Influencing Career". Under the theme of using communication tools, there is the sub-theme "Social Media and Society". The theme of being a student at the Faculty of Communication during the COVID-19 period includes the sub-theme "Expectations and Challenges".

When examined main themes, sub-themes and the perspectives of Faculty of Communication academics regarding the COVID-19 pandemic process, it is noteworthy that there are a total of 7 sub-themes under the main themes of "**Communication as a Process,**" "**Communication as a Science,**" and "**Being an Academician of Communication in Social Life**". Under the main theme of "Communication as a Process," the sub-themes include: 1- Social Life, 2-Natural Disasters, Pandemics, 3-Speed, Access to Information. Under the main theme of "Communication as a Science," the sub-themes include: 1-Reality, 2-Trust, Ethical Responsibility. Lastly, under the main theme of "Being a Communication Scientist in Social Life," the sub-themes consist of: 1-Acceptance Honesty, Challenges, 2-Transition Experiences to Academia.

The first main theme of the study is formed by the views of students. When the views of students attending a faculty of communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic process are examined, it is noticeable that their orientation towards communication science, the impact of family and environmental attitudes, perspectives on the profession, and personality traits, as well as their experiences related to the use of communication tools are influential. It has been observed that they define communication as a fundamental need of human life and that their experiences as students of faculty of communication during the COVID-19 pandemic period particularly manifested in the inclination towards social media usage and the increasing influence of visual media and additionally, it has been determined that they emphasize the importance of an ethicist in communication science valuing honesty, trust, and ethics in social life. In the main theme of orientation towards communication science, emphasis has been placed on career processes, and they have expressed their views on factors that have positive and/or negative effects on their orientation towards communication science and the process. For example, **S1** states, *"Language is a tool that provides understanding between people. Because language is one of the building blocks of culture, it ensures the transmission of culture from generation to generation. Similarly, effective communication relies on people listening to each other. Even if we share things for hours, if two or more people are not listening to each other, it's just noise. A good communication scientist should be able to listen to the other person without prejudice and objectively. My recommendation to those responsible people for education is that they must know how to listen to the student"*.

S2 states themselves as outgoing and social, describing their career preference for the faculty of communication as follows: *"I enjoy having fun, talking, and discussing specific topics. As a hobby, I listen to music, go for walks, and love watching horror movies. Similarly, if I had the time, I would also like to engage in theater because I believe I have a high ability for acting and memorization. I am studying in the RTS department, and my goal is to become a news anchor"*.

S2 and **S3** emphasize the importance of being good listeners for effective communication, as well as possessing the ability to understand, explain, and have a research-oriented mindset while they also mention that thoughts and beliefs, as well as family and societal structures, influence interest and attitudes toward communication science. They suggest that young people who choose to study at a faculty of communication should have an interest in sociology, technological developments, and psychology, and prioritize themes of social participation while they also stress the importance of being adaptable to changes. **S3**, who points out that societal events and historical changes also influence communication science, liken communication to an art form, stating: *"Communication is not just words. The choice of words, gestures, facial expressions, everything is communication. It is like practicing an art to use your words effectively, and before having good diction, a person must have a very good command of Turkish. For me, communication is about sincerity. Words must be sincere. These skills are not acquired at university but at home when a child opens their eyes to the world. Effective communication is an art, requires mastery of Turkish, and demands sincerity"*. **S3** emphasizes the importance of body language in communication science and its career-oriented effects: *"In effective communication, body language, movements are important... Effective communication is being able to convey what is in your mind exactly as you want it to the other person. As a skill, it involves a good and non-violent style, slow and fluent speech, and supporting with hand and gestures. People need to educate and develop themselves personally, and this desire must be within themselves"*. **S4** highlights the importance of body language in communication science and its career-oriented effects: *"In effective communication, body language, movements are important... Effective communication is being able to convey what is in your mind exactly as you want it to the other person. As a skill, it involves a good and non-violent style, slow and fluent speech, and supporting with hand and gestures. People need to educate and develop themselves personally, and this desire must be within themselves"*. **S4** emphasizes that the success of interpersonal communication depends on body language and the ability to think collectively, and that communication science should be developed in various fields to form professional career goals. **S5** relates their preference for faculty of communication to their curiosity about effective communication, as well as their desire to understand and be understood in daily life. **S5** states: *"I have been interested in the media since my childhood. First, I was interested in comedy shows. Then, I became interested in news channels. When I reached the 10th grade, I realized that I wanted to be a broadcaster. I noticed that I could use my voice like a broadcaster. That's why I'm in this department... Now, my ultimate goal is to become a broadcaster. For this path, I would like to work in a job in front of or behind the camera"*. **S5** emphasizes the need to be a good listener as much as being a good speaker and suggests that an effective communication scientist should be professional in gestures and facial expressions. **S5** describes the most important skills in communication career paths as using written and spoken language effectively, being a good listener, speaking briefly but efficiently, and managing the process of conveying information effectively between the sender and receiver.

S6 emphasizes that communication is one of our fundamental needs and a natural necessity and states that people can lead better lives and access accurate information and news

in their daily lives as long as they can communicate. **S6** expresses the view as follows: "*Our way of using language, gestures, and facial expressions are factors that affect our communication with others. The key to using them appropriately lies in learning communication. Therefore, learning and being able to use communication in our lives sets us apart and positively influences our daily lives. Communication is thus very important to us... My biggest reason for wanting to communicate better with people throughout my life was that. The most suitable way for me to tell my projects and stories in which communication was involved was to learn communication. Therefore, I wanted to work in a suitable profession as a medium where I could realize my dreams. That's why I chose to study at a faculty of communication*".

In general, within the main theme of orientation towards communication science, it is evident that the personal characteristics of students play a significant role. Their career choices are influenced by environmental and family attitudes. However, when it comes to choosing a faculty of communication for education, the factors such as their childhood and/or secondary education, during which they develop an interest in societal life, interpersonal relationships, news, technology, curiosity, research desire, and the underlying reasons behind individuals' behaviors and attitudes, are highlighted. Moreover, their inclination towards research is also prominent.

When examined the views on career progression and factors influencing career choices, it is evident that students' inclinations, attitudes towards the profession, opportunities for development, and limitations are influenced by various factors such as financial status, work life, family and social environment, the quality of education received, interest in science and technology, creativity, and cultural influences. For example, participant **S4** expresses, "*Since childhood, I have always wanted to create creative things. After completing my education, if I continue in this sector, I will most likely be able to work in a job involving creativity, possibly working with computers or learning a programming language outside of the sector. Currently, I am learning programming language and producing electronic music, which are also options for me. Even when I am alone, I talk to myself, and the silence doesn't completely dominate my day. I believe the desire for communication is a natural code given to humans*". This statement illustrates how the effort to manage effective communication skills in communication science and the attempt to keep up with developments in technology and changes can be turned into an advantage in one's career through educational efforts targeted at the profession. Almost all participants emphasize the necessity of postgraduate education, experiencing different cultures, and preparing themselves with practical training before entering the profession. For instance, **S6** highlights the necessity of postgraduate education as follows: "*After completing my education, my first goal is to enroll in a postgraduate program. Alongside this, I aim to gain experience by working in the sector and building a successful academic career. Therefore, among my primary goals is to complete my postgraduate education at one of the good universities in Turkey, in addition to international postgraduate programs, and to complete the necessary steps to become a lecturer by presenting my individual work to society*". Similarly,

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S7 emphasizes the importance of following the internet and television and the necessity of practice by stating, "*Due to my great interest in the media and my desire to work in journalism, my career goal after education is to complete my postgraduate education and work as a presenter on a news channel*". These examples demonstrate how students' views on career progression and factors influencing career choices reflect a comprehensive understanding of the field, a proactive approach to education, and a willingness to adapt to changes in technology and society.

S9 also emphasizes on how communication education should be delivered and emphasizes that practical applications should be conducted by teaching staff with rich field experience. **S9** states, "*Communication is the best thing I can do in my life. Since my high school years, I have been eagerly looking forward to studying in this department. Now that I have realized my dream, I am very happy. As for my career goal after education, I strive to develop myself in every field. I am developing myself in social media, advertising, design, cinema, radio, and editing areas. I plan to integrate all of them into my professional life. Communication is the most important building block of our lives. Without communication, we cannot talk about any situation. Everything starts with communication. Experience is necessary for effective communication, and the teaching staff at our university are very influential in this regard, so it is very important for me to benefit from these experiences in my education*".

Another important topic that students emphasize is the use of communication media. The main theme of the use of communication tools includes *social media and society* as a sub-theme. Regarding the impact of the pandemic and the increase in the use of mass communication tools, **S1** emphasizes the significant role of communication tools in social events such as health, social life, pandemics, and disasters. **S1** states, "*Mass communication tools influence society. For example, I believe that the usage of mass communication tools has definitely increased during the pandemic. People benefited from mass communication tools to pass the time and to stay informed about global developments. The individuals I communicate with the most are my family and friends, and the communication tools I use intensively are smartphones and computers. I often use social media platforms because I think they help pass the time and provide an opportunity to see how people are doing when everyone in the world is experiencing the same thing*". **S2**, on the other hand, shares their desire to better communicate with people, express themselves, gain self-confidence, and engage in forward-looking production, which led them to choose the faculty of communication. **S2** shares their aspiration to become a presenter on a well-known channel and to convey accurate information to people. In their opinion, "*Communication is a necessary concept for understanding and obtaining information with people, and good communication can keep us at high levels in all areas*". Additionally, **S2** also emphasizes that communication scientists have the right to access accurate and realistic information, just as they are expected to swiftly share accurate information about online environments, developments, and societal events.

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In **S3**'s views emphasizing the prevalence of communication and the importance of using communication tools correctly for effective communication, **S3** states, "*Communication is present in every aspect of life and is not just about language. While the importance of communication is so great, I can say that communication is actually the art of understanding and expressing oneself. For example, I aspire to be a manager... In addition, I can also engage in hobby-focused radio programming or podcasting. And perhaps in the future, I could even write scripts. But for now, my primary goal is to become a manager... The reason I chose this faculty is that I want to develop myself in this field, and I believe I can do this job with passion... I communicate most frequently with my friends, family, and teachers through WhatsApp, Discord, and Instagram. When I use them for communication purposes, they are also the three most frequently used applications that fulfill their functions for playing games with my friends and keeping up with the agenda*". By using the expression "the art of understanding and expressing oneself" for effective communication, participant **S3** also emphasizes the necessity for a communication professional to have mastery of the Turkish language. **S3** also touch upon the importance of using communication tools correctly and staying updated with current developments as a profession that requires sincerity.

The final main theme of students' opinions is "*Being a Student of the Faculty of Communication During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Period*". Under this main theme, there is a sub-theme of "*Expectations and Difficulties*". Students share their experiences as both as students of faculty of and as individuals experiencing a societal event through the eye of communication science. For example, **S3** mentions on learning about the pandemic through the first precautionary application and states, "*I learned about the pandemic when schools were closed. I saw the effects that led to various thoughts that brought me to the department I am currently studying in and matured these thoughts during the pandemic, influenced by the news and social media*".

S5 states, "*I became aware of the pandemic through news channels,*" while **S7** says, "*I became informed about the pandemic through television*". Both participants emphasize that news organizations have the responsibility to provide reliable and accurate broadcasts by considering the instant interactions and responsibilities of mass media communication. During this period, students also mention that their expectations affect decisions regarding education, and they express that the requirements for education focused on technological infrastructure and applications are not adequately met. For example, **S6** emphasizes the expectations that the pandemic creates for communication scientists and the psychological effects on societal life: "*There have been reflections of the pandemic on individuals' communication processes. I observed that during the coronavirus, individuals had to communicate more intensively through smartphones, which I consider an important communication tool. However, it is clear that people's communication skills have deteriorated, and there has been a psychological setback due to the pandemic*".

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S7 emphasizes the importance of active student involvement in education through their experience and states, *"Communication or education is not something that necessarily requires face-to-face interaction under normal circumstances. However, when unprepared, education cannot be as productive as desired... A teaching method that involves students more, such as assignments like filming projects, could have been adopted"*.

The opinions also highlight the emphasis on distance education during the pandemic, pointing out the opportunities and educational prospects provided by remote learning, as well as the challenges encountered during this process. **S3** expresses, *"When evaluating distance and face-to-face education as a communication science student, some online education, namely distance education, was very efficient while others were not... There should not be distance education in communication education"*.

S5 emphasizes *"the need for continuous monitoring and updating of distance education, by highlighting the necessity for oversight mechanisms as much as infrastructure in online environment arrangements"*. Participants highlight that the pandemic has had a negative impact on communication while also increasing the use of communication tools and playing a dominant role in organizing life.. Overall, it is determined that students who express that communication scientists should be competent in communication and technology, meeting societal expectations for accurate, reliable news, technological competencies, and purposeful, qualified educational opportunities emphasize the importance of planning education for communication scientists to meet these expectations in pre-professional practice processes and enriching internship application competencies. For instance, **S4** suggests, *"When we look at it, these departments are a bit about looking differently, seeing, and being related to creativity, but we memorize a lot, we receive a lot of theoretical knowledge, instead, more practical training should be provided. Elective courses should nourish us in terms of creativity, even psychology, philosophy, and mythology should be involved. Schools themselves are currently using pirate programs, so frankly, I would like the programs used during the learning period to be given to students. Nowadays, the situation should be taken further and practical simulation environments should be created "*. This viewpoint underscores the importance of practical training, elective courses, and the development of simulation environments in education to address the diverse needs and competencies of students in the field of communication science and new media technologies.

The findings of the study include the views of the participants academics of faculty of communication on the COVID-19 pandemic process. When the views of academics are examined according to main themes and sub-themes, it is noteworthy that there are a total of 7 sub-themes under the main themes of **"Communication as a Process," "Communication as a Discipline," and "Being a Communication Scientist in Social Life"**. Under the main theme of "Communication as a Process" the sub-themes include: *1-Social Life, 2-Natural Disasters, Pandemics, 3-Speed, Access to Information*. Under the main theme of "Communication as a Discipline," the sub-themes include: *1-Reality, 2-Trust, Ethical Responsibility*. Lastly, under

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the main theme of "Being a Communication Scientist in Social Life," the sub-themes include: 1-Acceptance, Honesty, Challenges, 2-Experiences of Transition to Academia.

When examined the theme of "Communication as a Process," it is noteworthy that academics especially emphasize the importance of rapid and accurate access to information during events that concern societal life, such as natural disasters and pandemics. In this regard, **A1** particularly emphasizes their competence and frequency of using online platforms and states: *"I check my Twitter feed two or three times a day to keep up with the agenda. I visit some news websites once a day. I visit Facebook and Instagram once or twice a day to stay informed about developments regarding my relatives and friends. I rarely make posts on these platforms".*

A3 expresses the view that the overwhelming amount of information available in recent times has made information somewhat worthless and states *"The ease of access to information, in a way, has devalued information."* On the other hand, **A6** emphasizes the crucial role of communication, especially in times of war, pandemics, and natural disasters. **A6** state, *"As people's need for accurate information has increased, the proper management of this process and the implementation of correct communication strategies are as important in resolving societal insanities and concerns as they are in returning to normal routine afterwards".*

When examined under the theme of Communication as a Scientific Field, it is noteworthy that academics emphasize the importance of trust, sincerity, and authenticity in the field of communication science. All academics as participants who highlight that news and content based on science provide realistic, impartial, and trustworthy sharing generally express the need to utilize the views and experiences of communication scientists, especially in the fields of mass communication and interpersonal communication, particularly in extraordinary circumstances. **A1** who emphasizes the triggering effect of the presence of new communication environments on societal transformation underscores the necessity of collaboration with communication scientists in managing societal crises and overcoming them with less damage.

According to **A1**, digitalization and linguistic advancements are important, while according to **A2**, the free circulation of information will advance science: *"To follow international literature, I frequently visit the databases of reputable universities. The free accessibility of this data is the right to the free circulation of knowledge and is important for the dissemination of science, advancing it eclectically"*, indicates that the progress toward science depends on using current sources, designing accessible educational environments, and ultimately evaluating the process through communication. **A4's** perspective states, *"Technological developments affect communication. Changing conditions in social, political, and economic life alter communication preferences. The transformation from extended family and group communication to individual communication, the shift from social communication environments to individual communication environments, such as the presence of film viewers transitioning from cinema halls to digital platforms due to economic reasons"*, can be diversified. **A5** highlighting the positive aspects of globalization as the facilitation of

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knowledge access and sharing mentions, *"On social media, people generally encounter recommendations, channels, and shares based on their digital footprint, meaning these filter bubbles actually lead people to follow channels and accounts that are close to their own views, their own styles"*. This reflects their view on the structure of the digital world.

When examined the opinions of academics regarding the most frequently heard words during the COVID-19 pandemic: According to **A4**, the most commonly heard words during the pandemic are Zoom, quarantine, hybrid, vaccine, China-Wuhan, bat, mask, cologne. According to **A5**, the most frequently heard word is *"Stay at Home"*. **A6** mentions that the most commonly heard words are online classes, vaccine, mask, disinfectant. According to **A7**, the most heard words are fear, anxiety, boredom, depression.

In the theme of being a communication scientist in societal life, academics share their thoughts on working conditions, societal life, language and cultural characteristics, as well as acceptance, honesty, difficulties, and experiences transitioning to academia. For example: According to **A1**, *"Communication tools greatly influence the structure of societies. From this perspective, it can be said that communication tools have a decisive impact on the speed of societal transformations and largely determine the direction of societies. Research conducted in such an important field is of significant importance and cannot be neglected"*. On the other hand, **A3** emphasizes that *"lifestyles have globalized through media channels, and information has globalized"* due to the rapid advancement of communication technologies.

According to **A4**, communication professionals must obey to ethical principles due to the necessity of trust and honesty. Additionally, the media literacy of society is as important as those working in the field of communication. Therefore, it is recommended to develop the media literacy skills of society: *"Being aware of this power as a content creator and being able to act in accordance with ethical principles are fundamental requirements. From the perspective of recipients, it is necessary to approach the field of communication with media literacy critically. In this sense, digitization has played a significant role not only in facilitating and disseminating content creation but also in transforming the position of individuals in communication processes, allowing access to content from different sources and increasing interactivity"*.

Regarding the transfer to academia, **A5** expresses, *"I pursued academia as a career goal because I love research and learning"*. All academic participants suggest that individuals aspiring to advance in the field of communication should have developed education and field application skills, observational abilities, and expressive skills. Furthermore, they recommend involvement in studies based on understanding the relationship between communication, language, and culture. **A6** who emphasizes the mutual interaction between communication and society states from the perspective of the global COVID-19 pandemic, that the value of verbal communication has been understood better and due to not wearing masks in non-verbal

communication, the importance of facial expressions and other forms of communication that complement speech has become clearer.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this section, the results of the research obtained from the data are discussed based on national and international literature, and conclusions and recommendations are provided. It is suggested that there are uncertainties about the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic not only in our country but also worldwide. The general acceptance in the research and studies (Koltermann, 2021; Otfried, 2020; Srivastava, Shrivastava, Chhabra, Naqvi, & Sahu, 2020) suggest that only a situational assessment can be made based on the experiences during the pandemic, and the necessity of outlining a framework for the coming years can be established over time.

According to the data gathered from the research, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in different main themes for students studying communication and communication academics. The main themes identified for students of faculty of communication are *Orientation to Communication Science*, *Use of Communication Tools*, and *Being a Student of a Faculty of Communication During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Period*. From these main themes, the subthemes for Orientation to Communication Science include "career process and factors affecting career," for the Use of Communication Tools main theme, it includes "social media and society," and for Being a Student in of Faculty of Communication During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Period main theme, it includes "expectations and challenges".

In these main themes, participants have provided explanations regarding their preference for studying communication sciences, highlighting concepts such as enjoying interacting with people, having strong social skills, and being sincere and open-minded. It can be said that these views align with studies emphasizing the importance, relevance, and educational power of communication science (Piwinger & Zerfaß, 2007; Okun & Hoppe, 2017; Vester, 2002). Regarding the use of communication tools, participants have expressed the need to develop various skills, primarily language skills, alongside keeping up with technological advancements. This view is supported by scholarly publications in the international literature. For example, Breen (2007) critically assesses new media technologies' sociological implications in his article "Mass media and new media technologies. Media studies: Key issues and debates," and provides important insights into the future direction of the communication field. Similarly, Scientific studies that highlight language proficiency also parallel the findings suggesting the necessity for participants to make progress in this area (Grigoryan & King, 2008; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). During the pandemic period, experiences related to online education were also discussed. Some participants mentioned that they chose communication faculties due to aspirations of becoming broadcasters. However, it's important to note that communication faculties do not typically aim to train broadcasters. Based on the data gathered

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from participants' perspectives on communication education, it is recommended to introduce a course focusing on career planning or related topics in the first year, emphasizing communication education in relation to the sector from a career-oriented perspective. Additionally, importance should be placed on teaching English, particularly as it pertains to universal communication, and students should be encouraged to explore creative thinking pathways for self-improvement.

The main themes identified for faculty of communication academicians are: "Communication as a Process," "Communication as a Scientific Field," and "Being a Communication Scientist in Social Life." Under these main themes, a total of 7 sub-themes were identified. Under the theme "Communication as a Process," the sub-themes include social life, natural disasters, pandemics, speed, and access to information. Under the theme "Communication as a Scientific Field," the sub-themes include reality, trust, ethics, and responsibility. Lastly, under the theme "Being a Communication Scientist in Social Life," the sub-themes include acceptance, honesty, challenges, and experiences in transitioning to academia. Communication academicians expressed their close monitoring of digital media platforms and social media while they stated that they generally do not post on these platforms frequently. They emphasized the importance of staying updated on current trends and new technologies as a necessity. Academics emphasizing the increased need for communication scientists during periods such as pandemics, when society struggles to make decisions, also express the importance of informing the public honestly and sincerely. They highlight the necessity for collaboration with industry representatives in this regard. These views expressed by communication academicians parallel findings from research conducted on the COVID-19 pandemic in the literature. For instance, Perifanou, Economides & Tzafilkou (2021), in their study titled "*Teachers' digital skills readiness during COVID-19 pandemic*," highlight one of the lessons to be learned from pandemic periods as the necessity for educators to be proficient in digital technologies, able to use and implement them in all educational activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a significant transition towards more advanced teaching and learning in higher education through artificial intelligence (AI) and consequently, educational institutions and universities have undergone digital transformations involving AI integration. (Bygstad, Øvrelid, Ludvigsen & Dæhlen, 2022). However, However, instructors may not be sufficiently competent in artificial intelligence to manipulate AI technologies to facilitate teaching, learning, and assessments. Despite being aware of the existence of these technological services, they may lack competence not only in technical non-skills such as collaboration, teamwork, decision-making, and communication but also in understanding the ethical concerns and limitations behind them. It is stated that a series of challenges, such as technical difficulties, ethical concerns, and the limitations behind using AI tools in their teaching, have been identified alongside the pandemic. (Ng, Leung & Su, 2023). Additionally, it is among the findings of academics that face-to-face communication has been disrupted due to the use of masks during the pandemic. However, they also note that verbal communication and the importance of all types of communication tools have increased. Despite this, verbal

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communication and the importance of all forms of communication tools increased, according to the observations of academicians. Many academicians also noted that restrictions during the pandemic affected the film industry and cinema showings, but individuals confined to their homes had an increased need for communication tools. Based on these findings, it is recommended to facilitate access to digital libraries and databases for academics during processes like pandemics when they cannot go to school or the library. It is also suggested to increase collaborations between academia and the industry and to develop online measurement and evaluation instruments along with online education opportunities.

Participants also emphasize the concept of "self-improvement" in their views, and highlight the importance of professional and technical skills, personal connections, and industry experience to facilitate this. The experiences of participants regarding the pandemic process are observed to unfold as follows: anxiety and unease, efforts to adapt, rapid digitization, and the ability to turn negatives into advantages.

As a result, it is believed that the mentioned recommendations will contribute significantly to providing scientific data and improving the qualifications of those working in this field during future crises and pandemic situations and this includes making accurate and up-to-date news sharing in news transmission, program design, and implementation, planning an effective communication process, and, concurrently, preventing panic, inadequacy, and negative perceptions in society. This is expected to contribute significantly to promoting informed decision-making by the community during crisis periods.

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Appendix 1

Person Code	Age	Sex	Departure and Class	The reason of preferring Faculty of Communication	Career Goal	Concept of communication	During Covid-19					
							The people that you communicate mostly	Communication tools that you use frequently	Online platform that you prefer/ Why?	The number of people at home	Uz.Öğr. Öğrenci	Have you worked?
S1	21	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 4. Grade	The idea that communication is a popular field today and that it can progress	Advancing in the field of television	Transfer of emotions and thoughts	Family, friends	Smart phone and computer	Social media platforms / Passing time and communicating with the world	4	2	Yes, for 4-5 months
S2	18	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 1. Grade	The idea of being able to communicate better with people, being able to express oneself, being self-confident and being able to produce	To convey correct information to people as a well-known announcer	The idea of being able to get along with people, gaining knowledge, improving life and rising	Family	Smart phone	Social media platforms /Due to quick access to current news and quick communication with the environment	3	2	Yes, 1 week
S3	19	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 2. Grade	Desire to improve oneself in this field and the idea of taking part in the profession with pleasure	Being a manager	The art of understanding and expressing oneself in every aspect of life	Family, educators	Smart phone and computer	Whatsapp, Discord and Instagram / For communicating, playing games and following the current agenda	12	12	No
S4	24	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 4. Grade	Having verbal intelligence, a desire to leave the city she/he lives in and a desire to do creative things	Doing creative work on the computer, making electronic music	A natural code given to humans	Family, friends	Smart phone, computer, Internet	Internet / For the purpose of obtaining information and news	5	3	No
S5	18	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 1. Grade	His/her interest in the media	Being speaker	News and information transfer	Family	Smart phone	Instagram / Because it is a platform where young people are concentrated	4	1	No
S6	22	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 4. Grade	To communicate better with people	Having an academic career	A natural need, necessary to sustain life better	Family	Smart phone, computer, TV	Twitter, Instagram, YouTube / To be up to date, to be informed, for personal development	6	2	No
S7	19	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 1. Grade	To produce programs for television and present them to people	Being a presenter, announcer or voice actor on television	Method of sending and receiving messages between all living things	Family, friends	Smart phone and computer	Social media / To fill your free time	8	1	No
S8	23	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 3. Grade	Due to interest in media and journalism	Academic career or becoming a news anchor	Desire to be a spokesperson for people's problems	Family, friends	Internet and television	Discord / Due to the ability to communicate by becoming a member of more than one group	4	2	Yes / hotel receptionist for 2 years
S9	19	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 2. Grade	Because of that he/she can do best, his/her dream in high school	To be successful in various fields of media	The most important building block of life	Family, friends	Smart phone and computer	Instagram, whatsapp, twitter / Following the news, filling free time	3	1	No
S10	23	Female	Ege Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema 4. Grade	Because of her/his interest in all types of communication	Having an academic career	Information transfer and socialization	Family, friends	Smart phone and Internet	Instagram, Twitter / due to their popularity, getting reliable news and following the current agenda.	3	0	No

Table-1: Demographic Information of Students of Faculty of Communication and Their Usage of Communication during the COVID-19 Period

Appendix 2

Person Code	Age	Sex	The university that he/she works	Professional Seniority	The courses that they teach	Have you conducted a practical course in the last year?	In Daily Life	
							Communication tools that he/she frequently uses	Social media tools that you use frequently
A1	43	Male	Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	21 years	- Basic Photography -Documentary Cinema -Experimental Cinema Short Film Applications -Social Responsibility Project -Graduation Project	5 courses	Smart phone, computer	Twitter, news sites, Facebook, Instagram / Following the agenda, receiving news, following people around
A2	31	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	5 years	-Copywriting -Photography -Digital Editing	No	Smart phone, computer, tablet	Whatsapp, Instagram, Letterboxd, IMDB, Boxoffice, Binkitap, Twitter / Following the agenda, being informed, communicating with the environment, spending free time
A3	42	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	14 years	The basic concepts of law -Communication Law -Media Ethics -Media Policies in the EU	No	Smart phone, tablet	Instagram, Twitter, Ekşisözlük / Following the agenda, learning people's attitudes about social developments
A4	46	Female	Ankara Baskent Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	10 years	-Introduction to Cinema -Production in Cinema -Documentary Cinema -Video Action	2 Courses	Smart phone, computer, tablet	Twitter, Youtube, Mubi, Disneyplus, Netflix, Instagram, / To follow the workflow, to follow current developments and developments from the field
A5	30	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	4 years	No	No	Smart phone, tablet	Instagram / To be informed
A6	43	Female	Izmir Yasar Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	16 years	-Introduction to Radio TV -TV Production Design -Construction Project	2 Courses	Tv, radio, smart phone	Whatsapp, Instagram, OTT, Teams, Moodle / Providing workflow, communicating, spending free time, receiving news
A7	43	Male	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	15 years	-World Cinema History -Documentary	No	Tv, radio, smart phone	Instagram / For free time
A8	33	Female	Ege Uni. Faculty of Communication Radio, Television and Cinema	7 years	No	No	Smart phone, computer, tablet	Websites, Instagram / To spend free time
A9	45	Female	Canakkale Onsekiz Mart Uni. Faculty of Communication New Media Department	2 years	-Scenario Writing -Documentary Journalism -Women-Focused Journalism -History of Popular Music -New Media Sociology	2 courses	Smart phone, computer	Twitter / Because it's reliable
A10	34	Male	Izmir Kavram MYO, Department of Visual, Audiovisual Techniques and Media Production	8 years	-Fiction -World Cinema History -Text and Script Writing -Guided Study	3 courses	Smart phone, computer, TV	Instagram, Twitter, Spotify / Following the agenda, spending free time and listening to music

Table 2 Demographic Information of Faculty of Communication Members and Their Usage of Communication during the COVID-19 Period