

INFORMAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

GÖZDE DEMİR ERTUĞRUL

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

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Gözde Demir Ertuğrul

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Gözde Demir Ertuğrul, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

Signature.....

Date

ABSTRACT

Informal Learning Experiences of School Counselors

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study aims to investigate the challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and strategies for coping with the difficulties of school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic from the adult education perspective.

Phenomenology was employed in the research as one of the qualitative research approaches. Guided interview questions were utilized during the semi-structured interviews of the thirteen (13) school counselors, one of which was a pilot study.

Thematic analysis was used for the verbatim transcripts of the interviews by utilizing MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program. In the current study, seventeen (17) themes emerged: four (4) themes emerged under the title of challenges, five (5) themes under the title of opportunities, four (4) themes under the title of informal learning experiences, and four (4) themes under the title of strategies to cope with challenges. The themes of adverse effects on well-being, communication difficulties, technology adaptation challenges, and professional/vocational procedure difficulties are challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The themes of flexibility in terms of time and locality, the opportunity for self-initiated professional development, convenience and comfort, facilitation of participation, and online counseling are opportunities for the COVID-19 pandemic. The themes of social media and digitalization, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), reading and researching, and social support groups are informal learning experiences. The themes of getting information from reliable sources, physical self-care activities, professional solidarity, and connectedness, and maintaining daily routines are coping strategies.

ÖZET

Okul Psikolojik Danışmanlarının COVID-19 Döneminde

Yaşadıkları Enformel Öğrenme Deneyimleri

Bu çalışmanın amacı okul psikolojik danışmanlarının COVID-19 pandemisi döneminde yaşadıkları zorlukları, fırsatları, enformel öğrenme deneyimlerini ve zorluklarla başa çıkma stratejilerini yetişkin eğitimi perspektifinde araştırmaktır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yaklaşımlarından biri olan fenomenoloji kullanılmıştır. Biri pilot çalışma olan on üç (13) okul psikolojik danışmanının yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerinde rehberli görüşme sorularından yararlanılmıştır. Görüşmelerin birebir transkriptlerine MAXQDA nitel veri analiz programından yararlanılarak tematik analiz uygulanmıştır. Mevcut çalışmada on yedi (17) tema ortaya çıkmıştır: zorluklar başlığı altında dört (4) tema, fırsatlar başlığı altında beş (5) tema, enformel öğrenme deneyimleri başlığı altında dört (4) tema ve zorluklarla başa çıkma stratejileri başlığı altında dört (4) tema ortaya çıkmıştır. İyi olma hali üzerindeki olumsuz etkiler, iletişim zorlukları, teknoloji uyum zorlukları ve profesyonel/mesleki prosedür zorlukları temaları, COVID-19 salgınının zorluklarıdır. Zaman ve mekan açısından esneklik ve zamandan tasarruf, kendi kendine başlatılan mesleki gelişim için fırsat, kolaylık ve rahatlık, katılımın kolaylaştırılması ve çevrimiçi danışmanlık temaları COVID-19 pandemisinin fırsatlarıdır. Sosyal medya ve dijitalleşme, sivil toplum kuruluşları (STK'lar), okuma ve araştırma ve sosyal destek grupları temaları enformel öğrenme deneyimleridir. Güvenilir kaynaklardan bilgiye erişim, fiziksel özbakım faaliyetleri, akran dayanışması ve günlük rutinleri sürdürme başa çıkma stratejileridir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Learning, like breathing, is something everyone does all the time- 'you are never too old to learn' - even if they do not realize they are doing it. It is a fundamentally human process.

Malcolm Tight

Following the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case in Turkey on March 11, 2020 (BBC News, 2020), educational institutions quickly adopted distance education as a precautionary measure. This sudden shift led to the widespread implementation of distance education across all K-12 schools, resulting in changes to school counselors' work conditions (Reimers, 2020). Consequently, this transition impacted students and parents significantly and required additional support from school counselors. (Karaman et al., 2021; Reimers, 2020). This process affected not only students and parents but also school counselors greatly. Literature mentioned several challenges lived by school counselors (Akgul et al., 2021; Karaman et al., 2021). They encountered multiple personal and professional challenges, especially at the beginning of the pandemic (Akgul et al., 2021). Personally, isolation, social distance, uncertainty, stress, anxiety, fear, loneliness, and depression are the severe personal challenges experienced by counselors (Khan et al., 2020 & Litam et al., 2021). In addition to the school counselor role, they handled other functions (parenting, partnering) outside their work life. Increased duties and responsibilities shifted work and home boundaries and caused role conflict (Putri & Amran, 2021).

Regarding professional challenges, numerous competing demands affected their job performance. The importance of guidance and counseling services increased during the pandemic because of the enormous need (Akgul et al., 2021). Professionally, accessing students and parents as target groups was one of the main problems from the perspective of school counselors. Connecting with the students and their parents at a distance was more accessible than face-to-face during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Mielgo-Conde et al., 2021). Because of this reason, it was indispensable for school counselors to increase their technical knowledge and skills to perform their jobs effectively. (Çağlayan & Taşkın, 2021). Learning to use some Web 2.0 tools like Canva, social media platforms, and online presentation techniques emerged as some technical training needs (Strear et al., 2021). As all processes continued, school counselors, especially those working at public schools, were alone in handling challenges and acquiring new knowledge and skills informally (Strear et al., 2021). Consequently, the importance of informal learning increased for public school counselors. In such a challenging period, psychological support and supervision became more critical than ever for counselors to cope with the challenges.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic-induced shift to distance education, there were also some beneficial aspects for school counselors. The growth of virtual online communities supporting specific populations increased (Çağlayan & Taşkın, 2021). Many users of these online communities reported feeling less constrained in their online interactions, which highlights the potential for school counselors to collaborate through virtual communities to promote student success (Glasheen et al., 2013).

In sum, this present study attempted to investigate the challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and strategies for coping with difficulties of school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of adult education.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Learning continues throughout a lifetime. It can be likened to an endless journey, as humans have been pursuing knowledge for centuries, whether consciously or unconsciously, to survive. This pursuit has evolved and has taken place in every human environment. Various professional groups have undertaken to learn to advance in their respective careers.

Learning has become more self-directed and informal with changing conditions (Bonk, 2009, 2010). Certain circumstances allowed this change. The epidemic that emerged in the city of Wuhan, China, and spread all over the world is one of these situations (Xu et al., 2020).

On January 7, 2020, in Wuhan, the Chinese government concluded that a novel type of coronavirus, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was responsible for causing a disease with severe upper respiratory tract infections in patients (Xu et al., 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) identified it as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-2019) (WHO, 2020a). On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared a pandemic caused by COVID-19 (Xu et al., 2020), and Turkey reported its first case of the disease on the same day, thus becoming affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation abruptly impacted the education system as the COVID-19 pandemic became part of our daily lives. The Ministry of National Education initially

announced a short-term school closure and swiftly transitioned to distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The importance of school counseling increased due to the deficiencies in students' academic and social-emotional life during the COVID-19 Pandemic period. Because students could not go to school and socialize, school counselors were more needed (Mielgo-Conde et al., 2021) than ever to be involved in the academic and social-emotional process as learning environments moved into the homes (Kelty, 2020). Students and parents needed school counselors to struggle with their challenging situations.

Although schools quickly adapted to distance education and remained in virtual learning environments from the beginning of the 2020 - 2021 academic year with the pandemic (Savitz-Romer, M et al., 2021), this transition took time for the school counselors. They needed to improve their knowledge and skills to support their students and parents in online counseling (Yılmaz, 2019). School counselors played a role in both taking and giving education as adult educators. Thus, this study attempted to identify the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic period.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and strategies for coping with the difficulties of school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of adult education. With this purpose, the following specific research questions were addressed:

- 1) What are the perceived challenges for school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- 2) What are the perceived opportunities for school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- 3) What kind of learning practices (informal) did school counselors experience during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- 4) How did school counselors struggle with the difficulties they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic? What strategies did they use to cope with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.3 Significance of the study

In this part, I would like to mention the significance of the study. People live in a world characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) due to globalization and the rapid advancement of information technology (Wen et al., 2020). As Strear et al. (2021) mentioned, the quick transition to distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic may be one of the closest examples of this uncertainty. Many people have remained in a state of chaos regarding what to do. Schools have witnessed this chaos closely, and school counselors have been situated at the center of this uncertainty. While living in this world characterized by VUCA (Wen et al., 2020), they created an environment of the learning experience with their own will and effort without any pressure. Informally and self-directedly, they came out of this chaos by learning new things. Distance education led to a change in the way of education, which means that the shape of doing training converted to online. Therefore, school counselors could join them from anywhere with an internet connection and a device, especially when schools are closed. This

finding was also reported by Pangelinan (2021) that school counselors regulate their counseling practices and look for more professional development opportunities to enhance their skills concerning the needs of students.

This study aims to contribute to both theoretical and conceptual literature and the practice of challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and strategies for coping with difficulties from the perspectives of school counselors. First, this study will contribute to the literature, as there is a significant gap in national and international research on school counselors' challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and coping strategies. Although many studies have been conducted in the literature on educational activities during the COVID-19 period, there needs to be more research on the challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and strategies for coping with the difficulties of school counselors during the COVID-19 period. It is also hoped that this study will contribute to the literature regarding the practical value of school counselors' challenges, opportunities, learning experiences, and coping strategies during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Identifying the informal learning experiences and training needs of school counselors would help school counselors who are also adult educators, both taking and giving education, to perform their job more effectively in needed circumstances.

1.4 Researcher positionality/identity of the researcher

I have been working as a school counselor at several public middle schools in İstanbul, Turkey, and I was personally and significantly directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic period. Like other school counselors, I encountered challenges in reaching students and parents online with the transition from face-to-face to

distance education. We had to have some informal learning experiences. As public school counselors, we felt alone in overcoming these difficulties.

In this research, the researcher is a data collection and analysis element (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this reason, the qualitative researcher defines the basic structure examined in the study and thus directly affects the research path (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I accept that my personal and professional experience as a school counselor affected the researcher position.

Besides working as a counselor in a public school, I am a master's student in the Adult Education Program, which significantly made me realize the importance of assessing the needs of school counselors. By identifying key opportunities and challenges, I would like to contribute to developing in-service training programs meeting the demands of online school counseling.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents related literature on informal learning. Yet, it starts with the general definition of distance education since the context of this study was mainly embedded within this concept. Then, the chapter continues with the concept of adult education and informal learning and finally concludes with informal learning in school counseling.

2.1 Distance education

There are many definitions of distance education in the literature. Saykılı's (2018) definition is one of the most up-to-date and inclusive. According to Saykılı (2018):

Distance education is a form of education that brings together the physically distant learner(s) and the facilitator(s) of the learning activity around planned and structured learning experiences via various two- or multi-way mediated media channels that allow interactions between/among learners, facilitators as well as between learners and educational resources. (p.5)

According to Moore and Kearsley (2012):

Distance education is teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies as well as special institutional organization. (p.2)

The common point between Saykılı (2018) and Moore and Kearsley's (2012) definitions of distance education may be that distance education takes place through technology in both definitions.

The rapid transition to distance education with several online learning resources profoundly impacts the ideas and beliefs that encompass learning (Song & Bonk, 2016). People can learn from each other face-to-face or remotely. Face-to-face

or virtual learners want to know anything self-directed informally to improve their personal and professional knowledge (Song & Bonk, 2016). Sometimes informal learning could happen because of crises. Especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, education systems have begun to suffer (Daniel, 2020). With the change in learning environments and the transition to distance education after the COVID-19 Pandemic, this process has dramatically affected teachers and school counselors as education system employees. While teachers could keep up with this new system more easily with formal learning and organized online environments (EBA: Education Informatics Network), school counselors were alone in this process. They greatly supported students and parents (Karaman et al., 2021). However, since most of the job descriptions of school counselors are determined by face-to-face communication, this new situation would be a process that needs to be investigated for them as well. Therefore, school counselors must help students who struggle with difficulties and obstacles. (Kotarski, 2020). To overcome such challenges smoothly, school counselors have experienced self-directed informal learning from their colleagues face-to-face or remotely from virtual resources. Although many people have enrolled in virtual schools and online universities, especially with the pandemic (Song & Bonk, 2016), some still need to do more. One of the main differences between these individuals is self-motivation as a powerful guideline to deal with the complication of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Self-motivation has a facilitative effect on the difficulties because it causes self-directed learning as an action. A self-directed learner only expects from other professionals formally.

Although many studies have been conducted in the literature on educational activities during the COVID-19 period, there needs to be more research on the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 period.

This study aimed to contribute to this gap in the literature to understand the self-directed learning aspects of informal learning of school counselors when overcoming the difficulties of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Song & Bonk, 2016). The gap addressed in this qualitative study describes school counselors' learning needs during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

To provide integrity in the literature, I want to mention the concept of adult learning.

2.2 Adult learning

The literature on adulthood has presented numerous definitions, referencing psychological maturity and social roles (Merriam & Brockett, 2011). Knowles (1980b) incorporates both criteria, asserting that an individual should be considered an adult from an educational standpoint if they not only fulfill adult roles but also have a self-concept that reflects adulthood. This refers to the extent to which an individual perceives themselves as fundamentally responsible for their own life (p. 24).

Since the inception of adult education as a discipline, a multitude of theories and models have been put forth by scholars and practitioners (Sarkan, 2021). The concept and scope of adult education have evolved and expanded over time to encompass a greater range of learners and contexts (Merriam & Brockett, 2011). One of the most widely recognized definitions of adult education is Houle's (1972) characterization, which posits that adults engage in educational activities to enhance their personal development or that of their communities, whether individually, in groups, or within institutional settings (p. 32).

Knowles (1980b) is also known for presenting a prominent definition of adult education, which he describes as "a process of adult learning" in the broadest sense. Alternatively, in a more technical sense, adult education encompasses "a set of organized activities carried out by a wide variety of institutions to achieve certain educational goals" (p. 25). Knowles also proposes a third interpretation that "integrates all these processes and activities within the concept of a movement or social practice" (p. 25). Similarly, Usher and Bryant (2014) posit that adult educators are responsible for training adults, aligning with Knowles' conceptualization of adult education (Usher & Bryant, 2014).

Knowles (1980) outlines four principles of adult learning. Firstly, adults can direct their learning process through their self-regulatory mechanisms. Secondly, new learning is influenced by past knowledge, with further information building upon prior understanding. Another critical principle is including relevant, up-to-date content in adult learning relating to both professional and personal spheres. Lastly, adult learning should prioritize problem-solving approaches that address real-life issues faced by adults.

2.3 Informal learning

Various definitions of informal learning differentiate it from structured, organized, or formal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2015). Informal learning can be described as any activity that involves seeking understanding, knowledge, or skills outside the educational institution's curriculum or the courses and workshops provided by educational or social agencies. It occurs in any context outside the established curriculum of educational institutions (Livingstone, 2006, p.206).

Informal learning takes place anywhere and at any time, responding to challenges and problems that require new or modified knowledge, skills, or attitudes, exactly when and where they are needed (Marsick & Neaman, 2018). The authors argue that informal learning is intentional, providing learners with greater flexibility and placing the primary control of learning in their hands, even though they may not always be aware of the learning process. Informal learning can occur when individuals are driven by curiosity, pursuing their interests, or addressing recognized gaps. In contrast, incidental learning is unintentional and may even be unconscious, happening while engaged in a task or activity unrelated to the goal or purpose of learning (Marsick & Neaman, 2018).

According to Merriam et al. (2009), informal learning encompasses various learning types that often need clarification. The concept of informal learning is quite extensive, leading researchers to examine it by comparing it to other forms of learning. Instead of defining informal learning based on its characteristics, the common approach is to define it in contrast to formal learning. The literature often emphasizes the distinguishing factors of informal learning about instruction, such as the setting or context. However, Colley et al. (2002) challenge this division and broaden the scope by considering not only the questions of who and what, but also how and where the learner is engaged in the learning experience. Through a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature, the authors identify key criteria that can be utilized to differentiate between informal and formal learning in Table 1:

Table 1. Differences Between Formal and Informal Learning

FORMAL LEARNING	INFORMAL LEARNING
Teacher as authority	No teacher involved
Educational premises	Non-educational premises
Teacher control	Learner control
Structured, planned	Evolving, organic
Summative assessment, accreditation	No assessment
Externally determined outcomes / objectives	Internally determined objectives
Open to participants according to set criteria	Preserves inequality and sponsorship
Interests of powerful and dominant groups	Interests of oppressed groups
Propositional knowledge	Practical and process knowledge
High status	Low status
Measured outcomes	Immeasurable / imprecise outcomes
Education	Not education
Learning predominantly individual	Learning predominantly communal
Learning to preserve status quo	Learning for resistance and empowerment
Pedagogy of transmission and control	Learner centered, negotiated pedagogy
Mediated through agents of authority	Mediated through learner democracy
Fixed and limited timeframe	Open ended engagement
Learning is the main explicit purpose	Of secondary significance or is implicit
Learning is applicable in a range of contexts	Learning is context-specific

Source: Colley et al. (2002), p. 18-19

Numerous definitions of informal learning differentiate it from structured, organized, or formal learning approaches (Marsick & Watkins, 2015). Therefore, it will be helpful and constructive to state the division of learning concepts, which are formal, informal, and non-formal learning. The learning methods from the

perspective of adults first outline formal and non-formal learning. Formal learning is an organized and structured form of adult learning that can be completed with a certificate or diploma (Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004).

Non-formal learning is planned and outside a specific curriculum or system (Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004). Non-formal learning does not end with an educational credential (European Commission, 2001; Livingstone, 2006).

It will be helpful to analyze informal learning from the perspective of adult learning. Informal learning is an essential concept for adult education. Informal learning is all kinds of learning activities that do not depend on the curriculum (Livingstone, 2001). While formal learning refers to planned and non-random learning at private, state, and all school levels, informal education, unlike formal education, generally relates to non-planned, experience-based, incidental learning (Merriam & Brockett, 2011).

Informal learning is hidden in experience-oriented, daily life activities that can take place in various contexts and forms (Marsick & Neaman, 2018). It can be intentionally or unintentionally encouraged (Sarkan, 2021). Reed and Loughran (1984) describe informal learning environments as beyond school settings. The importance of informal learning increases as students move from high school to college and graduate school since it can occur anywhere (Chen and Bryer, 2012).

The field of adult education encompasses numerous theories and models that aim to explain and advance adult learning (Sarkan, 2021). As Merriam (2001) notes, "Adult learning is far too intricate, too individualized, and simultaneously too context-specific for a single theory" (p.1). Thus, it is crucial to examine adult learning definitions from various perspectives.

To begin, exploring the concept of self-directed learning within the context of adult learning is beneficial. Self-directed learning is a critical concept for informal learning involving autonomous learning. In self-directed learning, the learner takes charge of the learning process. Adult learners consciously and intentionally take control of their learning, setting their objectives, conducting research, determining how they will learn, which methods to employ, and evaluating their learning processes (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991).

The responsibility belongs to the learner (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). One of the essential points of the self-directed learning model, which is a part of informal learning, is that the adult learner takes the initiative in learning (Van Noy et al., 2016).

Responsibility for learning and motivation to learn to affect the level of self-direction in self-directed learning. Responsibility for learning is to take ownership of the relevant task. The reason to know is the willingness to take responsibility (Sarkan, 2021).

According to Clardy (2000), there are four types of SDL:

- Induced SDL,
- Synergistic SDL,
- Voluntary SDL, and
- Scanning SDL.

In induced SDL, the learner learns obligatory and is subject to authority. The learner has to learn the knowledge. In synergistic SDL, the learner does not depend on power, does not have to learn, but still retains. In the voluntary SDL, the learner consciously wants to know. The difference from the synergistic SDL is that

voluntary SDL is an inspiring learning environment provided by someone else. The search for a new learning environment continues at Scanning SDL.

Secondly, it is helpful to understand that adult learning is experiential. Kolb (1984) outlines six characteristics that define and conceptualize experiential learning:

1. Learning is a process rather than a product or outcome.
2. Learning is grounded in experience.
3. Learning is a holistic process that involves adapting to the world.
4. Learning is a process of creating knowledge.
5. Learning resolves conflicts.
6. Learning involves transactions between the individual and their environment.

Based on these characteristics, Kolb defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Kolb explains experiential learning with the cycle, which is taken below as experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb et al., 2018):

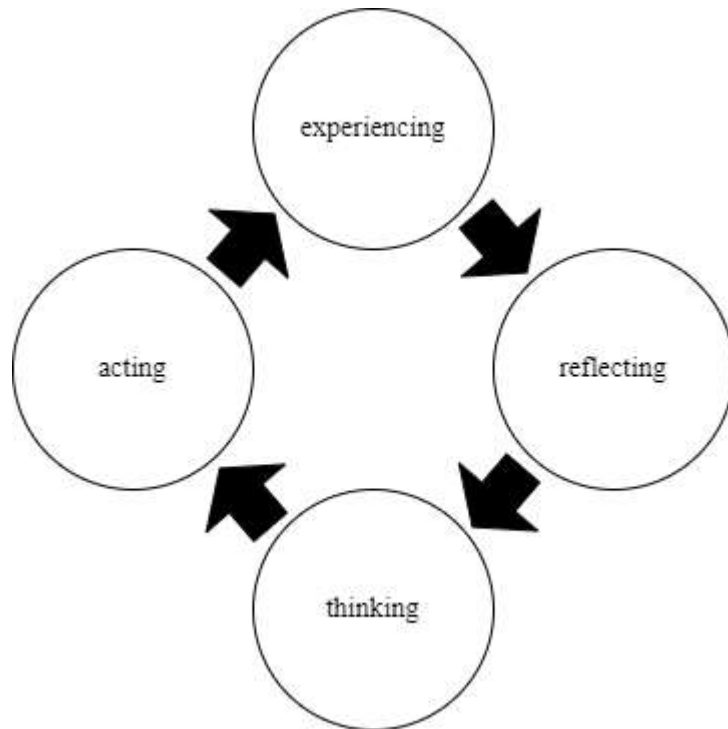


Figure 1. Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning

Transformative learning is a significant theory in adult education, as Kitchenham (2008) noted. Mezirow (1978a) is credited with introducing the concept of transformative learning in his work with women who returned to school or the workforce after an extended absence in the United States. Transformative learning comprises two main components, critical reflection, or critical self-reflection on assumptions, and critical discourse (Mezirow, 2006), which refers to the process an individual uses to evaluate the epistemic nature of problems and the truth value of alternative solutions (King & Kitchener, 1994, p. 12). Mezirow drew inspiration for transformative learning from Kuhn's (1962) paradigm, Freire's (1970) conscientization, and Habermas's (1971, 1984) learning domains (Mezirow, 1978a, 1991a, 2000). These theorists contributed to the occurrence and shaping of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Transformative learning commences with a confusing dilemma about oneself and what is happening worldwide. The individual

tries to change and re-occur the way of thinking, and the transformation starts at that point (Sarkan, 2019).

2.4 Informal learning in school counseling

There are numerous studies on teachers' informal learning. However, there is a gap in school counselors' informal learning experiences in the related literature. Before moving on to the informal learning experiences of school counselors, it would be appropriate to briefly present psychological counseling and guidance services.

Psychological counseling and guidance (PDR) services are one of the student personality services and continue from kindergarten to higher education. (Yesilyaprak, 2003). While the traditional guidance model was adopted in educational institutions until the 21st century, it was argued that it was insufficient to meet the needs after the 2000s. After these years, the transition to the inclusive guidance model was adopted (Bacıoğlu, Kocabıyık, & Malkoç, 2017). The main idea of the inclusive guidance model has been the understanding of serving all students, not just students with problems. (Yıldız, 2020). Consequently, with this model, school counselors' workload has increased compared to the traditional model because the responsibility of reaching students has been burdened onto school counselors much more. With the COVID-19 pandemic, school counselors' workload was exacerbated with the transition to distance education (Koç and Kaçdi, 2022), because this time, it was unclear where, how and in which way students could be reached. Likewise, students and parents did not know how and in what way to reach the school counselor. Later, when the pandemic progressed, and distance education started to be adopted, it was then possible to reach students online, although the

problem of reaching all students and parents still continued. And the concept of online counseling has entered the professional life of school counselors.

According to Bor (2002), counseling has become increasingly prevalent in various fields, including healthcare, family, and schools. As living conditions change, the demand for counseling has grown (Barwick, 2000; Baruch, 2001). To address this need, the concept of "school-based counseling" or "school counseling" has been introduced in educational institutions (Cooper, 2013). This type of counseling has become particularly crucial for children, adolescents, and their families (Bor, 2002). Barwick identified various problems for which school-based counseling is necessary, including bullying, peer pressure, sibling rivalry, grief, abuse, and family conflict. Through counseling, professionals can help young people recognize and accept their problems and identify solutions that address their circumstances (Bor, 2002).

School-based counseling has shifted towards online counseling in recent years, with an even greater emphasis on online counseling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although online counseling has existed since the 1960s, the pandemic has accelerated its adoption. In the 1960s, a program called "Eliza" was developed as a prototype for client-focused counseling, allowing for an interaction between the counselor and client by selecting responses from computer memory (Binik et al., 1997). Since then, mental health professionals have increasingly used technology in their work (Richards & Vigan, 2012), and this trend has continued to grow. Nowadays, technology is used in various counseling activities, and online therapy has become especially prevalent during the pandemic.

Over time, various methods of online counseling were developed and implemented (Yılmaz, 2019). These include cybercounseling through

videoconferencing, audio-only cybercounseling, and text-based cybercounseling. To explain these methods briefly, cybercounseling through video conferencing is a technique in which the counseling process between the client and the therapist occurs via video conferencing, allowing both parties to see each other online in real-time (Ainsworth, 2004).

The second approach is audio-only cybercounseling, which involves counseling conducted between the client and the counselor over the telephone (Bee et al., 2008). The third approach is text-based cybercounseling, in which the therapeutic relationship between the client and counselor is established through written communication. Text-based cybercounseling can be divided into synchronous and asynchronous (Heinlen et al., 2003). In synchronous text-based cybercounseling, correspondence between the client and counselor is real-time, while in asynchronous text-based cybercounseling, there is a delay in response time. Email is the most used form of asynchronous text-based cybercounseling.

The COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted the necessity for new adult learning experiences aided by technological advancements. While these experiences were initially required due to the pandemic, it is believed that they will continue to be utilized even after its conclusion, thanks to the continuing evolution of technology (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019).

In Turkey, school counselors learn much about their profession from their colleagues, often turning to them for guidance when faced with challenges. The support and mentorship they provide to one another, even without a formal mentoring program, can positively impact personal and professional growth (Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Alleman, Cochran, Doverspike & Newman, 1984).

It is deemed that the ability to continue learning and derive benefits from the learning process is contingent upon the characteristics of the learner (Sarkan, 2021). Factors such as individual traits, abilities, educational background, and social and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping a person's motivation to learn, as well as the processes and outcomes of their learning endeavors (Sarkan, 2021).

According to White (2012), individuals who possess foundational learning skills and have previously had positive experiences with education are more likely to excel in all forms of learning, including informal learning. These attributes enable learners to recognize learning opportunities, approach them with an open mind, exhibit greater confidence, tackle problems more effortlessly, and engage in self-directed learning. Van Noy et al. (2016) provide an illustrative example to support this relationship. According to him, if an adult lacks confidence in their ability to perform a task well enough to achieve the desired outcome, they may consciously or unconsciously avoid opportunities for learning (Van Noy et al., 2016). This information may explain the motivation and curiosity of school counselors for informal learning.

In recent years, several studies have emphasized the strong connection between learning and identity (Ileris, 2014; 2014a; Brown, 2017; Pittaway et al., 2005; van Kippenberg et al., 2005; Rogers, 2014). These studies indicate that learning and identity mutually enrich each other and lead to new understandings in both domains. According to Rogers (2014), learners engage in learning experiences with their entire being, resulting in a cyclical and increasingly complex learning process as new insights and lessons are integrated. Given that informal learning is predominantly unconscious, learners face challenges in constructing their identity as learners, thus adding complexity to the exploration of informal learning. Rogers

(2014) suggests approaching learning through the lens of multiple identities and examining the effects, changes, and narratives of identity during research in this field. Erstad and Sefton-Green (2013) also highlight that identities are multiple, flexible, and relational, and informal learning involves the construction of these identities, linked performances, and abilities. To comprehensively analyze informal learning, it is crucial to acknowledge the unconscious aspect of learning and its implications for learner identity.

Although informal learning experiences vary from person to person, it may also be possible for people doing the same job to have some common learning experiences. Social support and solidarity can be at the top of the informal learning experiences experienced by school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic (Barratt and Duran, 2021; Ghaith, 2002; Di Napoli et al., 2021)

Barratt and Duran (2021) emphasized the importance of social support for school counselors in terms of informal learning. Collaboration among school counselors could be critical. In Ghaith's (2002) study, it was found that there is a positive relationship between cooperative learning and the degree of academic support provided by teachers and success. Likewise, the research revealed that cooperative learning was positively associated with perceived degrees of academic and personal support provided by teachers and peers. Social support groups may play an important role in supporting the growth and development of school counselors.

Solidarity could be the strategy for coping with the challenges for school counselors. Therefore, the importance of professional solidarity and connectedness could be increased as school counselors supported each other in times of need and helped each other when they encountered challenging situations. Di Napoli et al. (2021) reported that, as in disaster conditions, the sense of community is essential for

protecting communities' well-being. As mentioned by McMillan and Chavis (1986), a feeling that members belong, that they are necessary to each other and to the group, and a shared confidence that members' needs can be met through a commitment to being together.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents research methodology under the headings of the research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and validity and reliability.

3.1 Research design

Qualitative research has increased in importance in recent years. Many researchers have shifted their focus to qualitative research to uncover deep and unique meanings for the phenomena they wish to investigate (Çelik, Başer, and Kılıç, 2020). Thus, this study used a qualitative research design to identify the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Due to its suitability for the research questions and the research purpose (Yılmaz, 2019), qualitative research was preferred in this study. In other words, qualitative data consisting of words and emphasizing people's lived experiences were suitable for this study (Creswell, 2016). Another reason qualitative exploratory research was preferred is that qualitative methods are ideal for discovering the meaning people give to ideas they experience (Yılmaz, 2019).

As one of the qualitative research methods, phenomenology was selected to investigate the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic period. The reason for choosing phenomenology is that it studies "... people's conscious experiences of their lifeworld" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 26) and frequently includes human experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The phenomenological research

method is appropriate for the task because this study investigates school counselors' challenges, opportunities, and informal learning experiences.

3.2 Participants

In the study, thirteen (13) participants working as school counselors in public middle schools in Beykoz, Istanbul, were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. Since the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize to a population but to develop an in-depth study of a topic (Creswell, 2016), the researcher selects the participants to be included in the research, either intentionally or deliberately, best to understand the underlying reasons for these participant views.

Consequently, the purposeful sampling technique allowed the researcher to select those who could help school counselors develop a detailed understanding of the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

In this qualitative research, participants were selected through criterion sampling under a purposeful sampling technique rather than randomly (Creswell, 2014).

Three criteria were used for the selection of participants:

1. Before completing a bachelor's degree in a related field, participants should have at least a bachelor's degree in psychological counseling and guidance.
2. Minimum of 4 years of work experience as a school counselor -
Another criterion in determining the participant is that each participant should have a minimum of 4 years of work experience as a

school counselor. The reason for at least four years of the work requirement is that the participants are asked to sincerely answer and explain the interview questions related to school counseling in the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

3. Working in public middle schools - Thirdly, participants were selected among school counselors who work in public middle schools. Determining the participants among the school counselors working in middle schools because it is thought that online studies are done more at this level than the primary level, as I talked with the primary school counselors. Another reason for choosing the school counselors working at the middle school level for this study is that my experience with this age group of students broadened more than my other age groups' experience because I have worked as a school counselor for ten years. For instance, I observed that students at middle schools could use online tools better than primary school students. Furthermore, the 8th-grade students take the high school entrance examination in Turkey every year at this level. Especially before the exam, 8th-grade students need support on exam anxiety. Anxiety has become a common presenting concern among students seeking therapy (American College Heal: Education 2016; Twenge et al., 2010). Therefore, middle school counselors have more experience in counseling and guidance services virtually during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Additionally, including counselors who work in the same school was important for the research in understanding the differences in their self-learning

experiences. To choose thirteen (13) school counselors, approximately seven (7) middle schools in Beykoz, İstanbul, were determined because while some schools have a school counselor, some schools have more than one. (School counselor norm in public schools is determined based on the number of students registered in the school by the Ministry of National Education. Therefore, while some schools have one school counselor, some schools may have more than one school counselor. Because of this reason, approximately seven (7) schools were determined for the current study.) In these schools, thirteen (13) school counselors with at least four years of experience as school counselors in public schools were selected through the criteria given above. One of the participants was selected for the pilot study.

Table 2 presents the participants' experiences as a school counselor, experiences as a school counselor at the present school, and education level in the guidance and psychology and related fields. To keep the identity information of the participants confidential, code names were used instead of their real names.

Table 2. Participants Demographics

Participant	Experience as a school counselor	Experience as a school counselor at the present school	Education level in the guidance and psychology and related fields
Pilot study - Güler	23 years	17 years	Master's degree
1. Özge	9 years	9 years	Bachelor's degree
2. Ceyda	22 years	1 year	Bachelor's degree
3. Kerem	13 years	3 years	Bachelor's degree
4. Murat	10 years	10 years	Master's student
5. Gülin	9 years	9 years	Non-thesis master's degree
6. Öykü	8 years	3 years	Master's degree
7. Esra	9.5 years	8 years	Bachelor's degree
8. Buket	14 years	4 years	Master's drop out
9. Nurgül	6 years	4 years	Bachelor's degree
10. Demir	12 years	4 years	Master's degree
11. Sinem	9 years	4 years	Bachelor's degree
12. Aysa	7 years	5 years	Master's degree in clinical psychology

3.3 Data collection instrument

The data obtained in qualitative studies were collected using various data collection instruments in terms of their nature and reliability (Merriam, 2015). Direct observation and open-ended interviews are two instruments that answer questions about the purpose of the research (Merriam, 2015, p. 131). In addition, the researcher

will edit the notes she took during the research to reach the data. (Merriam, 2015, p. 141). In this study, primary data was obtained from semi-structured interviews.

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview form in line with the supervision of the graduate thesis advisor and the committee. The interview was preferred because it is more suitable for exploring and understanding people's experiences in-depth and in detail. (Palmer and Bolderston, 2006; Gravetter and Forzano, 2018). It was planned to include open-ended questions in the interview form to understand the participants' experiences (Berg, 2001) better and more deeply. For this reason, it would be more appropriate to use the semi-structured interview in this qualitative study, which explains the informal learning experiences of thirteen (13) school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic in this regard.

In the data collection process, the interview technique, a one-to-one data collection method used in qualitative research, "a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to only one participant at a time and records their answers," was used (Creswell, 2012, p.218). Semi-structured interviews were recorded via Zoom.

One pilot interview was conducted for the assessment and clarity of the questions. As potential problems and deficiencies could be seen in the research instruments and the research protocol in the pilot study, it was planned to conduct a pilot study before the implementation. The pilot interview was conducted for the assessment and clarity of the questions (Creswell, 2012). After the pilot interview, no changes were needed in the interview questions. It was seen that the interview questions served the purpose of the research questions. After the pilot study, the data collection process was started.

3.4 Data collection process

In this section, the data collection process is explained step by step.

First, one pilot interview was carried out to evaluate the questions. The pilot study was designed to collect feedback on the interview questions from one participant to probe questions and finalize the form. The participant was asked to provide an overall assessment of the clarity of questions and problems they had experienced (Creswell, 2012). Eventually, the respondents revealed that the questions were self-evident and that they felt comfortable responding; no modifications were made to the interview question form. The data was collected in the summer of 2022. All data were collected with the participants' informed consent. The researcher created an interview form for the study as a data collection instrument.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were held via videoconferencing. Before starting the interview, participants' permission was obtained through the Informed Consent Form-Turkish (APPENDIX C). The informed consent forms were sent to the participants through e-posta, and they were asked to read the document if they approved of participating in the study voluntarily. They were also asked to sign the form and send the signed version. They were also asked if they did not have an opportunity to sign the paper on a digital platform; they were requested to send an email indicating that they read the form and approved participating in the study. Based on the participants' permission, interviews were recorded. The interviews lasted approximately thirty (30) minutes. The questions asked in the interviews were provided in Interview Form-Turkish (APPENDIX E).

After finishing the pilot study, I began collecting data. The data was collected based on semi-structured interviews. The participants were asked interview questions

and given as much time as needed. Participants were reminded to sit comfortably and not to feel rushed when responding to the questions during the data collection procedure. Zoom was used to collect data because online data collection is cheaper, more convenient, and quicker (Birnbaum, 2004). Interview questions were asked to participants calmly. Before the interview began, participants were informed that the researcher would take notes so they would remember the responses. The situation for the answers to the questions that gave the researcher hesitation would be reaffirmed by participant confirmation after the interview.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis, frequently used in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006), was used as a data analysis method for this study. Thematic analysis organizes and describes the data set in detail by facilitating the identification, analysis, and reporting of themes at the stage of thematic analysis analyzing the results of qualitative research; it could be said that it is a flexible method that is independent of theory and can be used in various approaches. The study will be conducted by applying the thematic analysis with the method of Braun and Clarke (2006) consisting of six steps. These stages could be listed as follows: recognizing data, generating pre-codes, searching for categories, checking themes, identifying, and naming themes, and reporting findings.

Data analysis is the most critical stage of qualitative research (Flick, 2013), and therefore, the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program was used to facilitate data analysis (Chase and Mandle, 2001). The interviews were transcribed using this program, and each interview was transcribed individually by the participant's name.

Themes were then created, followed by sub-themes. While coding the themes, the transcripts were read at least 2-3 times at different times, and notes were taken.

By following the suggestions of Braun and Clarke (2006), firstly, I tried to recognize the data by reading the transcriptions several times. Using the MAXQDA program made it a lot easier for me to read. By reading transcriptions, I focused on generating pre-codes. I also used the logging part in MAXQDA. I wrote down every step I followed. Being able to access all data together quickly made my analysis process more manageable. I read through the transcripts several times. After reading the transcriptions, I searched for the current study's categories in the literature.

Then I started checking themes according to my research purpose and questions. After identifying and naming themes, I re-read them by evaluating them within the scope of themes. I colored each theme and created sub-themes related to it. I made changes occasionally after I read it repeatedly, loop by loop. Then, I reported the findings. Since I put so much effort into it, I can say that the analysis phase is one of the most challenging yet, simultaneously, the most informative parts of my study.

3.6 Validity and reliability

In this section, validity and reliability will be explained. The strategies planned to ensure this study's validity and reliability are described below.

3.6.1 Validity

Numerous studies have been conducted that develop criteria for high-quality qualitative research (Maxwell, 1992; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Seale, 1999). Two methods were used to ensure validity in the

current study. The first of these is to conduct a pilot study. Because the pilot study allows us to see if our interview questions measure what we want to measure, in this way, it is ensured that the questions work. After the pilot study for this research, no changes were made, as it was seen that the questions were working in the pilot study.

Another method used to provide validity is getting participants' approval at some points of hesitation. For this reason, some participants were asked again at the analysis stage, with telephone calls, after the interviews to check whether I understood what they said correctly or not. They were asked whether they volunteered for a short telephone call on this subject. Participants who were to be consulted again agreed to answer. We made short phone calls that would last for a maximum of five (5) minutes, at times convenient for the participants, in a way that would not force the participants. Thus, clarity was provided on the points of dilemma.

3.6.2 Reliability

To be considered credible, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis was performed precisely, consistently, and exhaustively by recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis in sufficient detail to allow the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Therefore, I detailed the data analysis process to increase reliability in the methodology section.

In this study, each interview transcript was individually processed through MAXQDA. Chase and Mandle (2001) mention presenting deciphered material to requesting individuals and using computer programs such as NVivo and MAXQDA as effective persuasion techniques among their list of techniques. Viewing each

person's transcript separately facilitated the process. After the transcription process, the data were subjected to coding and categorization. After the steps of coding and categorization, interpretation was carried out. Interpretation is based on abstracting a broader meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013) and making inferences (Patton, 2014). The interpretations can be grounded in the researcher's culture and personal experiences (Maxwell, 2013).

Peer evaluation is opening oneself up to the scrutiny and support of a colleague who is not directly involved in the study to maintain the researcher's honesty, develop their hypotheses, and shape their research design (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Expert opinions were sought to increase the reliability. Firstly, the thesis advisor from the Department of Educational Sciences at Boğaziçi University gave support to every step of the thesis. Secondly, during the coding and category formation stage for examination and confirmation, an opinion was received from a doctoral student researcher who has a thesis study in which qualitative research methods and content analysis method is used and articles published in the international literature. After the coding, category formation, and the creation of themes and sub-themes, the opinions of another researcher conducting a master's thesis were also obtained.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the research's findings in two main headings: themes that emerged from the data and a summary of the findings concerning the research questions.

The findings will be presented in this part because of the data analysis. This study used thematic analysis as a data analysis method, and MAXQDA was utilized as a qualitative software data analysis program. As a result of the data analysis, seventeen (17) significant themes emerged—figure 2 lists themes (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

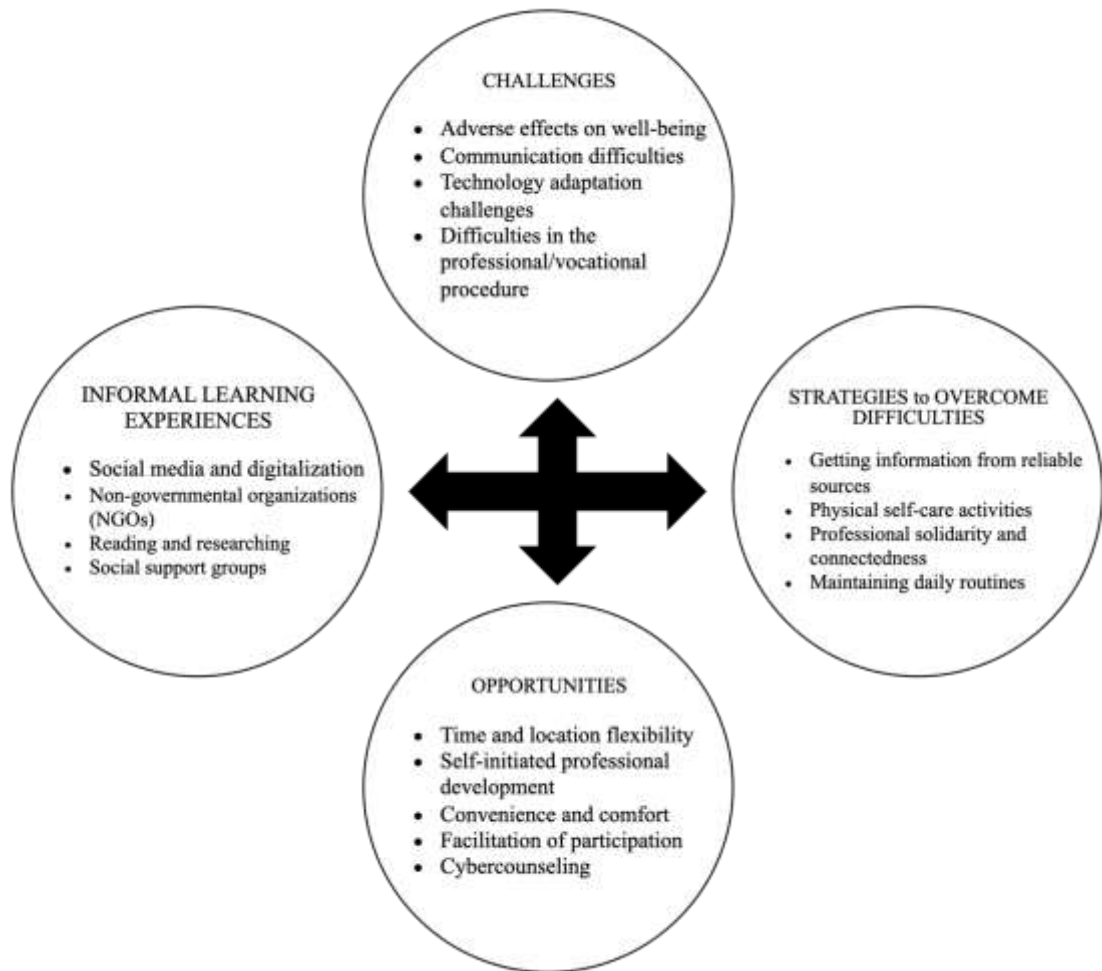


Figure 2. Categories and Themes that Emerged from the Data

Appendix F contains participants' original quotes in Turkish (See Appendix F). In parentheses, each quote is described by a participant's name, appendix F, and quote number. This research employed the utilization of a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. For example, (Özge, Appendix F, 1) demonstrates that the original Turkish statement of Özge can be found in Appendix F with a number that reports which quote it is.

4.1 The challenges faced by school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the responses of school counselors working in public middle schools, the first research question regarding the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic can be categorized into five themes. Table 3 presents the challenges faced by school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3. The Challenges Faced by School Counselors During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Challenges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Adverse effects on well-being	+		+			+				+	+	+
Communication difficulties			+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+
Technology adaptation challenges							+		+			+
Difficulties of the professional-vocational procedure	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+			

Note. The numbers in the first row of the table indicate the sequential numbers of the participants listed in the participants' table alongside their code names. The themes on which the participants expressed their ideas are represented by a plus sign (+) in the corresponding column of the table.

4.1.1 Theme 1: Adverse effects on well-being

According to the participants, one of the most critical challenges for school counselors during the COVID-19 quarantine was the aversive effects of the lockdown on participants' well-being. Six participants, Özge, Kerem, Öykü, Demir, Sinem, and Aysa, stated this was a major problem. For instance, in the following excerpt, Özge mentioned that as a social human being, social isolation made human

life quite challenging, and so she had. She mentioned the well-being issues she experienced during the pandemic in the following excerpt:

Looking at my life as a school counselor, I would like to speak about a few difficulties about myself during the pandemic. It was a situation that nobody had experienced before. We knew all countries faced the same problem, yet we had to adjust. Initially, working and staying at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic made us feel lonely and isolated. During the early days of the pandemic, I struggled with severe anxiety while staying home. I encountered some difficulties while managing the situation and making plans. I experienced sleeping issues while working from home and felt isolated. Staying at home constantly, being separated from loved ones, and dealing with health concerns caused significant discomfort. (Özge, Appendix F, 1)

Kerem also stated that the pandemic affected their well-being. Kerem seriously focused on anxiety about the future and loss in the past. Moreover, he mentioned being unable to label his emotions:

At the beginning of the pandemic, both children and us, as school counselors, had concerns regarding the future. These worries exhausted us. Came up after the anxieties, the situation included our sorrows related to the future and our regrets about what we lost and could not do in the past. The difficulties in expressing emotions were also experienced. Unfortunately, there were even moments when we could not put a name to some of our emotions, leading to anger outbursts from us as adults. (Kerem, Appendix F, 2)

For Öykü, professional or workplace isolation became a significant problem. As seen in her excerpt, loneliness due to isolation grew worse with the pandemic:

The aspect of COVID-19 that pains me the most is the loneliness that is endemic to our profession. So, you will be working alone. I have learned that no matter how crowded a school you are, you will be alone. (Öykü, Appendix F, 3)

For Demir, the significant problems were confusion, exaggeration, and unpredictability during the pandemic, which led to anxiety:

There was a pervasive sense of uncertainty, filled with numerous rumors, and we overestimated the situation. We had concerns about it. I do not know about other institutions in the first year, but we were far away from the school environment. I also had different concerns about the pandemic. Since I was in the risk group regarding age and weight, my anxiety increased. I have been infected by coronavirus twice. I faced

many challenges during my first COVID-19 infection, and the illness hurt me. (Demir, Appendix F, 4)

Şeyma was mainly concerned with family matters during the pandemic, especially for the relatives of health workers, whose lives have been even more difficult. Their challenging experiences were anxiety, fear, and uncertainty about medication use.

I belong to a family with numerous healthcare workers, and we were all initially frightened by the surge in COVID-19 deaths and the sensationalized media coverage. Those of us who had family members working in healthcare were particularly impacted by this situation. My physician brother was among the first in our family to contract COVID-19, and it was an extremely challenging experience for me. What scared me the most was the uncertainty surrounding the illness, the potential outcomes, and the use of medications. I found myself constantly worrying about what the result would be. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 5)

As seen by Aysa, daily routines could be significant to maintaining mental health and well-being.

It was challenging breaking away from one's usual routine. I noticed it at that time. Getting up daily, putting on makeup, and not going to work too much work. (Aysa, Appendix F, 6)

As indicated in the participants' responses, one of the primary problems experienced by school counselors during this period is the negative impact on their well-being.

Common emotional states include anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and loneliness.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Communication difficulties

According to the participants, one of the most significant challenges during the pandemic was reaching and communicating with the target group. In traditional face-to-face education, school counselors could quickly get children and their parents at the school, allowing for smooth interaction between the two parties. However, during online education, such interaction was often absent. Both groups needed to learn how to communicate effectively with each other. Consequently, communication was mentioned as a major challenge by eight of the participants (Kerem, Murat, Gülin,

Öykü, Esra, Demir, Şeyma, and Aysa) c. For instance, Kerem stated that making eye contact with students is crucial for effective communication, but this was not possible during distance education, making the situation even more difficult.

Our biggest challenge is the inability to establish eye contact with students, a crucial educational issue. This concern has been voiced by many of my colleagues as well. (Kerem, Appendix F, 7)

For Murat, facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice are essential in synchronous sessions. In the following excerpt, he expressed dissatisfaction with the inability to establish good and effective communication, but virtual communication does not make it possible:

Engaging in one-to-one conversations remotely posed a challenge, as using communication elements such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice was not feasible. These elements are crucial for conveying meaning and understanding; the conversation becomes incomprehensible without them. As a result, communicating remotely with these elements proved easier, with our efficiency levels dropping to around 20% - 30%. (Murat, Appendix F, 8)

For Gülin, the sudden interruption of communication with children made it difficult to reach them.

Our interaction with the children was abruptly interrupted. While making phone calls, the teacher directed the students to us. (Gülin, Appendix F, 9)

Öykü emphasized the importance of one-to-one communication for school psychological counseling. She explained that contact with middle school children is vital for school counselors. She mentioned that the interruption of communication during distance education affects them adversely. She explained that she had difficulties in how and through which channel she could reach children and parents. In addition, she also emphasized that children are reluctant to communicate through technological devices since children are already heavily exposed to digital platforms during distance education.

Professionally, communication was the biggest challenge. One-to-one close contact is very significant for our profession. I am working in middle school. I also oversee the middle school's 5th and 6th grades. It was vital for us to be in contact with those children, even at their age. At the time of the big shock, the big wave, we fell apart quite a bit, that is, with the children. We were still deciding which channel to reach, so I was left. Then, during distance education, yes, when children start their education, I wonder if this is a channel, I realized that children are exposed to computers very intensely. They are always in classes at EBA, and I could not find them on the computer in distance education again. It was not very attractive for children. It does not end with reaching the children. We, as school counselors, also need to communicate with the parents. As I said before, we work with the parents regarding age periods. I had many difficulties in terms of which channel to reach the parents. Yes, I had the most severe problem with getting the target group. (Öykü, Appendix F, 10)

Öykü also pointed out that students with special needs were largely ignored in that period.

We could have accessed the learners during COVID-19, but the inclusive students should have been noticed. In other words, it was much more difficult to access those children. We could not reach their families. Yes, all students suffered a lot, but their education has been interrupted less often than inclusive students. Special education students, especially our inclusive students who want to be in the leading group, have suffered the most. They were not visible. That is the part that hurts me about COVID-19 a lot. (Öykü, Appendix F, 11)

Esra mentioned the difficulties she experienced in reaching children and their parents during distance education. She also mentioned that face-to-face communication is more effective.

We faced many difficulties in terms of our branch. How do we reach children at first? You know, our job was a face-to-face process that was more active and more effective. It was something we needed to familiarize ourselves with in distance education. It was a different experience for us, but we had a hard time in that process. At first, we did not know how to reach children and their parents. We were distant from the parents and students in that process. In the beginning, the children were more focused on how the lessons would be at work, listening to the lectures. We were away, but we got it together later. (Esra, Appendix F, 12)

Demir also mentioned that they needed help reaching children in distance education.

Reaching children was more effortless in the school environment compared to digital alternatives. We had much trouble with this in distance education because when you want to get them, you cannot. When you call on the phone, you may need help contacting them. (Demir, Appendix F, 13)

Şeyma addressed the difficulties of being unable to communicate and reach the target group for a communication-based job and understanding people.

Like the rest of the world, we were initially confined to our homes, and since our job revolves around communication and understanding people, the lockdown posed a significant challenge. During this period, online meetings were yet to be a part of our daily lives, which made it difficult for me to connect with the children in the group I was working with, particularly those in the 5th and 6th grades. The primary school group, in general, faced even more significant difficulties. Initially, we needed help with communication issues. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 14)

Aysa underlined that she could not reach the students during the pandemic.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, my colleagues (working as teachers in the same school) were given seminars on conducting live lessons through EBA (Education Network). However, as a school counselor, I was not required to teach classes, so I did not participate. Occasionally, students requested to speak with me, but I did not consistently provide counseling services. Consequently, I needed help to connect with the students throughout the lockdown period. Later, upon my return, I realized that many students had issues they could not share with anyone and needed access to online communication tools to contact me. This made it difficult for me to connect with them, and I faced challenges supporting their needs. (Aysa, Appendix F, 15)

According to the responses from the participants, it is apparent that school counselors encountered major challenges regarding communication, both in terms of reaching out to children and their parents during distance education.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Technological challenges

As reported by three participants, Aysa, Nurgül, and Esra, the foremost challenges school counselors encountered during the pandemic were technology-related. The sudden shift to remote learning necessitated that school counselors rely heavily on

technological tools, which added to the complexity of their job. They had to learn and use new applications, such as EBA (Education Informatics Network), Zoom, and Google Meet, to establish communication with both students and parents. Although these video communication tools were familiar to many users, many school counselors had to adapt to them for the first time during the pandemic. Even when using these technological applications, they faced technical difficulties and a sense of insecurity. Moreover, the lack of technological devices available to students made their job even more challenging.

Aysa emphasized that the lack of informal experience in adapting to technology during the pandemic was one of the primary issues faced by school counselors. Older school counselors encountered more significant challenges in incorporating technology into their school counseling practices than their younger counterparts.

I had to learn how to use Zoom and other online platforms myself, as we needed to be given formal training on them. Through trial and error, I became more proficient in their use. However, I also noticed that my older school counselor friends needed help adapting to these applications. As younger individuals, we are more tech-savvy and have an easier time learning new technologies independently. Unfortunately, our teacher friends received a different training or support than we did. I suspect such activity may have been provided to my teacher friends who attended classes, but I am unsure. (Aysa, Appendix F, 16)

In addition to being unaccustomed to technological tools, applications, and their functions, Nurgül pointed out that technical difficulties also caused connection problems.

The connection issues were already at their peak during the initial phase of the pandemic and distance learning. When I connected to deliver online seminars, it felt like I was talking to myself. Disconnections occurred frequently, and we needed help receiving responses to our questions, making it challenging to establish eye contact with the students. I was left wondering what the students were doing on the other end. Technical issues were primarily related to the online medium. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 17)

For instance, Esra indicated that using the Zoom platform to communicate with students and parents during distance education created a sense of insecurity which made her nervous.

Initially, I was unfamiliar with the Zoom platform and had reservations about its reliability due to the numerous rumors circulating at the time, including concerns about information theft. However, upon reflection, I recognized the potential benefits of the platform and slowly overcame my initial anxiety. Eventually, the ubiquitous use of Zoom in all environments compelled me to adopt it for my work. (Esra, Appendix F, 18)

Nurgül said that one of the most challenging difficulties experienced in distance education might be that children do not have technology devices like computers, telephones, tablets, or the internet.

Many students need help accessing essential technology at home, such as phones, computers, headsets, or speakers. Although the government provided tablets or similar devices to some families, there was a high demand for these resources, limiting access. While some students may have had access but have yet to utilize it, many faced financial constraints that prevented them from obtaining the necessary technology or internet access at home. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 19)

As can be seen from the excerpts, technology-related difficulties created significant challenges in the school counseling practices of school counselors, and they had to struggle with those challenges on their own.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Difficulties of the professional-Vocational procedure

The seven participants, Özge, Esra, Buket, Kerem, Gülin, Öykü, and Nurgül, reported that adapting to the new circumstances in their professional practices was one of the significant challenges faced by school counselors during the COVID-19 lockdown. Özge mentioned difficulties adapting to the swift transition to online education in the following excerpt.

We all faced an adaptation problem with the sudden introduction of distance education due to the pandemic. As a profession heavily relying on face-to-face communication and mutual negotiation, this posed a challenge for us. When introducing distance education, I shared the same feelings with the children about how it would work. However, I had more difficulty than other teachers because our work is less precise and involves handling situations that arise spontaneously. During the pandemic, children's stress and anxiety made it more challenging to run counseling sessions remotely. Initially, it was difficult to find a suitable platform, but we eventually settled on using Zoom or WhatsApp for video calls. Our counseling sessions' duration, time, and interval had to change significantly, which presented additional difficulties. (Özge, Appendix F, 20)

Esra and Buket also highlighted the difficulty of adjusting to the changes brought by online education, which is a new and unfamiliar experience for students, parents, administrators, and school counselors.

At the beginning of the pandemic, they focused more on lessons and teaching processes. Teaching students was more important because this was new to parents and administration. In other words, it was an unprecedented process that caught everyone off guard, and no one knew what to do. (Esra, Appendix F, 21)

I encountered several challenges, particularly in adjusting to a world unprepared for remote learning and attempting to carry out our profession in this new format. The online processes were entirely foreign, and we encountered numerous obstacles in adapting to them. (Buket, Appendix F, 22)

According to Kerem, EBA (Education Informatics Network) was initially intended solely for teachers during the early stages of distance education. However, he expressed his dissatisfaction that no provisions were made for counseling sessions. He suggested that EBA (Education Informatics Network) could have been utilized more efficiently during this time.

We struggled at the beginning during this time - children, school administrators, and teachers alike. For instance, EBA (Education Informatics Network) did not initially have a designated session. Only branch teachers conducted online interviews or lessons. (Kerem, Appendix F, 23)

Gülin emphasized that she initially encountered difficulties adapting to technology during the early stages of remote education. She mentioned that there were no preparations or schedules for using EBA (Education Informatics Network) or Zoom, which made her job as a school counselor challenging.

Regarding my profession, I required assistance with technology integration during the initial phase of remote education, as neither EBA (Education Informatics Network) nor Zoom was available. Although some teachers were conducting private lessons via Zoom, there was a need for more structured planning. Eventually, the Ministry of National Education released an activity booklet as guidance. Following this, we approached the assistant principals and were allocated lessons. This was the approach we took. The process of technology integration proved to be quite challenging. (Gülin, Appendix F, 24)

Öykü expressed her concerns about the lack of support from the school administration in managing the remote education process. She noted no clear guidance on what to do and how to do it. Additionally, she mentioned that she faced challenges conducting face-to-face tasks during distance education and did not know how to proceed.

I faced numerous challenges during this period. Although I could conduct individual meetings, I needed help managing classroom work. I was reluctant to use specific platforms and struggled to find ways to connect with all the students simultaneously. For example, I had difficulty figuring out how to orient the 5th graders, promote class consciousness, and prevent 6th graders from losing interest in school after the pandemic. I was unsure how to develop a sense of belonging, and my materials needed to be more extensive. Therefore, I suggested using age-appropriate visual aids and making the experience more enjoyable to keep the students engaged. Our job is highly interactive and needs to be interactive even during remote learning. While it is easy to hold and connect with children in person, motivating them online is quite different. I do not know whether the school administration lacked trust in us or was uncertain themselves, but we received no guidance or direction during this period. We needed help to get a clear answer when we asked for assistance on how to do our jobs. (Öykü, Appendix F, 25)

Esra stressed that the current situation could be more familiar to students, parents, and administration.

At the beginning of the distance education process, the lessons focused more on the students, parents, and administration. It was a new situation for all of them, and no one was prepared for it. (Esra, Appendix F, 26)

Buket noted that adapting to the situation was challenging since working online was new to her.

There were difficulties in getting used to it as it was something that the world needed to prepare for. The online processes involved in our work were new, and we needed help adjusting to them. (Buket, Appendix F, 27)

Nurgül pointed out that one of the significant challenges during the distance education period was the absence of guidance hours.

Before the pandemic, we had raised concerns about the absence of a designated guidance hour, and unfortunately, the same issue persisted during distance education. The students were attending classes for a total of 7 hours without any allocated time for guidance. When we finally arranged for guidance activities after the 7 hours of lessons, there was a disappointing lack of participation from my school. Thus, the lack of time proved a significant challenge for me. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 28)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools were suddenly closed, school counselors reported significant challenges adapting to this sudden transition. The pandemic greatly impacted their professional lives, and they expressed the need for regulations at both administrative and ministerial levels to help manage the process more effectively.

4.2 Arisen opportunities by school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic

Based on the responses obtained from school counselors employed in public middle schools, the second research question regarding the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic can be categorized into five themes. Table 4 presents arisen opportunities for school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4. Arisen Opportunities by School Counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Flexibility in terms of time and locality and saving time	+		+			+	+				+	
Opportunity-time for self-initiated professional development	+	+	+		+	+					+	
Convenience and comfort			+	+			+		+			
Facilitation of participation/Accessibility	+			+				+	+		+	
Cybercounseling								+		+	+	

Note. The numbers in the first row of the table indicate the sequential numbers of the participants listed in the participants' table alongside their code names. The themes on which the participants expressed their ideas are represented by a plus sign (+) in the corresponding column of the table.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Flexibility and saving time

Six participants, Özge, Kerem, Öykü, Demir, Şeyma, and Aysa, identified flexibility and time-saving as the key benefits of distance education for school counselors.

Kerem and Esra also pointed out the convenience of attending online training and seminars.

Despite the widespread focus on the negative impacts of the pandemic, it is worth noting that there have been some unexpected benefits. For instance, attending online training and seminars provided the convenience of participating from the comfort of my own home when face-to-face attendance was impossible. I also increased my awareness by participating in interviews conducted by mental health professionals. (Kerem, Appendix F, 29)

Through online seminars, we connected with a wide range of educators, experts, and professionals from outside of Istanbul, where I work. This expanded access was precious given the logistical challenges of attending in-person events, including transportation issues. However, through online platforms, we could participate in all the seminars and events we desired, regardless of location. The flexibility of online education allowed us to transcend barriers of time and space. (Esra, Appendix F, 30)

In addition, Şeyma and Aysa noted the flexibility of distance education for reaching students and conducting seminars and training.

The option to attend lessons remotely from home or in a personal space was perceived as a welcomed freedom by students, as noted through their feedback. This approach facilitates greater ease of connecting with children, enhancing educational outcomes. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 31)

Conducting remote training and seminars via the Internet was a viable approach, particularly in cases where participants were invited to attend Zoom meetings or engage in activities for children. This approach remains used in some contexts, indicating its continuing relevance in modern educational practices. (Aysa, Appendix F, 32)

Öykü, a participant in a family counseling master's program in Ankara, mentioned the convenience of distance education. She stated that completing the program required physical presence in Ankara, but distance education enabled remote learners to finish the program.

The pandemic allowed me to pursue an online master's degree, which was a significant advantage. Thanks to distance education, I completed my program and graduated, which would have been difficult if I had to go to Ankara physically. (Öykü, Appendix F, 33)

In summary, distance education benefits school counselors and students, especially in flexibility and time-saving. Several participants highlighted the advantages of attending seminars, taking courses, and pursuing a master's degree through distance education.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Opportunity for self-initiated professional development

Seven of the participants (Özge, Ceyda, Kerem, Murat, Gülin, Öykü, and Şeyma) highlighted the advantage of online education for school counselors in terms of providing opportunities and time for self-development. For instance, Özge noted that she discovered she could access abundant online training that she would not typically attend in person.

We have all undergone the process of online learning, which has contributed to our increased awareness. This experience has facilitated our participation in studies across different fields and provided us with greater access to various types of therapy. (Özge, Appendix F, 34)

Ceyda noted that attending online training during the pandemic was not challenging, enabling her to find opportunities for self-development. She observed that accessing information has become more accessible, contributing to her personal and professional growth.

I discovered that I could participate in online training sessions that I would not have been able to attend in person. This allowed me to engage in various professional development activities. My most significant learning experience was realizing I could access most training sessions online. Therefore, online access to information has been the primary source of my extensive learning. (Ceyda, Appendix F, 35)

Kerem highlighted that while he believes all training related to his field of work should be conducted face-to-face, he acknowledges that distance education is a valuable alternative without in-person training opportunities. In his opinion, any form of education is better than no education at all.

Distance education has significantly increased awareness among professionals by enabling their participation in expert interviews. For instance, I was intrigued by the field of art therapy, which typically requires in-person attendance. While I believe all training related to our area should ideally be conducted face-to-face, the cost-benefit analysis has convinced me that the online sessions I attend are sufficient. The solution-focused therapy I learned online has been instrumental in my work at school, where time is limited. Participating in training sessions such as art therapy and solution-oriented therapy has been invaluable during this period. For example, taking art therapy has significantly

contributed to my ability to address issues like test anxiety and peer bullying, particularly among eighth-grade students, which I studied through my research. (Kerem, Appendix F, 36)

Murat pointed out that time is less important than before because time could be easily changed thanks to distance education. Distance and online education offered time and place flexibility.

Furthermore, the pandemic created opportunities for professional development in our field through distance education. The availability of online education through various platforms such as Zoom has dramatically increased, providing more flexibility and options for participants. Additionally, paid vocational training that was previously out of reach due to financial or geographic constraints became free online. Although face-to-face interaction with children was limited, we could still develop our skills and knowledge. (Murat, Appendix F, 37)

Gülin talked about the significance of attending online training where she wants to. It does not matter where educators or participants are situated.

I capitalized on the benefits of online training, which presented a valuable opportunity to attend courses that were otherwise unfeasible to attend in person due to scheduling conflicts or geographical limitations. This mode of training allowed me to conveniently participate in the training sessions from the comfort of my own home during evening hours. (Gülin, Appendix F, 38)

The online pursuit of a master's degree constituted a major advantage for Öykü's self-development that she effectively managed to handle. Moreover, she has expressed that this approach has allowed her to participate in numerous online training sessions.

Undertaking an online master's degree program presented a pivotal opportunity to enhance my professional qualifications, particularly as my previous experience was deemed insufficient to intervene fully in family-oriented education at the middle school level, where engagement with families is often necessary. The pandemic gave me the unique opportunity to pursue this degree remotely, which proved to be a crucial turning point in my career. Additionally, the pandemic allowed me to participate in numerous training sessions that were accessible online, which enabled me to develop my professional skills further. These training sessions were often serendipitously discovered through personal connections and informal networks rather than through formal channels. Despite their informal nature, these training opportunities proved valuable in advancing my professional expertise, mainly as they focused

on areas relevant to my work with students at school. (Öykü, Appendix F, 39)

According to Şeyma, distance education offered a significant advantage in terms of accessibility to professional training opportunities compared to traditional face-to-face education. Şeyma further elaborated on this point, recounting her prior experience attending the Rorschach and Projective Tests Association for a course conducted in person. Due to the requirement to physically attend the association, she could not participate in specific sessions due to scheduling conflicts with work hours. However, when the course transitioned to an online format due to the pandemic, Şeyma could attend and take full advantage of the opportunity to improve her skills and knowledge.

Before the pandemic, I was engaged in personal education pursuits. I was enrolled in the Rorschach Tests Practitioner Training program offered by the Rorschach and Projective Tests Association, which spanned 2.5 years. Initially, I attended classes in person during the evenings; however, the course schedule was altered due to my instructor's availability, which created scheduling conflicts with my work hours. I contemplated discontinuing the program as a result. The advent of online education platforms during the pandemic allowed me to resume my education remotely, which proved a convenient and advantageous alternative. In light of these developments, the shift to online education is a significant opportunity for my personal growth and development. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 40)

In conclusion, distance education afforded some participants the opportunity for self-initiated professional development. Although these individuals had previously engaged in personal development before the pandemic and the implementation of distance education, they could expand their personal growth through these channels.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Convenience and comfort

According to Özge, the increased use of online platforms has facilitated user access and made reaching the target audience, whether students or parents, easier. She specifically mentioned video conferencing platforms such as Zoom.

After the initial phase of the pandemic, we became more adept at the distance education process. My students, colleagues, and I became more familiar with and utilized the online environment more effectively. This involved holding Zoom meetings and using online platforms to engage children remotely. Due to various restrictions, conducting meetings online rather than in person was often more convenient. At present, we still utilize distance education in certain situations. (Özge, Appendix F, 41)

Kerem brought up another aspect of distance education, explicitly using communication platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp. These platforms enable users to communicate via video, audio, and phone. Kerem utilized these platforms to conduct interviews with students and their parents easily.

I utilized Zoom as the primary platform for group guidance and individual interviews during the pandemic. When the students were unavailable while the mother was with the father, we resorted to WhatsApp group conversations. I also employed "peer solidarity" to promote academic success in 7th and 8th-grade students. We created groups of 4-5 or 7-8 individuals who communicated through Zoom or WhatsApp video to discuss and resolve any problems they encountered. While the online interactions were not ideal, they provided support and continuity for the children during the pandemic. (Kerem, Appendix F, 42)

Murat shared his experience related to flexibility. He mentioned that the importance of time is decreased during online education.

Distance education facilitated the Parent Academies Project by providing convenience, particularly by inviting guests for evening sessions. This aspect of the project was significantly beneficial due to the flexibility and accessibility offered by the online platform. (Murat, Appendix F, 43)

Esra pointed out that one of the essential tasks of middle school counselors is to promote and arrange educational visits to various institutions. She noted that online school trips were a viable alternative for middle school students during the pandemic

and distance education. This allowed counselors to organize virtual visits to high schools for every student, which is only sometimes feasible in person due to logistical constraints. Therefore, online school trips serve as a convenient solution to this challenge.

Online school trips were useful during the distance education period. It is not possible to make physical trips to every high school and to host every student on such trips. While only two high schools were able to visit before the pandemic, students were able to visit many schools virtually, thanks to online school trips. In this way, more students were able to benefit from this opportunity. I can say that this was positive in terms of equality of opportunity. Some schools had already uploaded their content to their websites, allowing students to explore them remotely. We, the psychological counselors, introduced this approach to the students and explained the procedure. In some cases, counselors and students from the schools visited held live Zoom meetings to provide more information. (Esra, Appendix F, 44)

Nurgül asserted that technology had a positive impact on all of us. It provided a convenient means of simplifying the complicated process during the pandemic, and problem-solving was facilitated instead of ruminating on the difficulties or challenges. And also, this situation gives an opportunity in terms of equality of opportunity.

During the pandemic, we utilized technology to facilitate online appointments for students who needed to reach us. Specifically, I created a Google form that allowed students or parents to request an appointment with us, and we provided feedback on any issues the students were experiencing. The experience of giving counseling through online meetings highlighted the benefits of technology, which made our work more manageable. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 45)

The study participants reported that technology and distance education presented various opportunities, such as ease and convenience. Throughout the interviews, the participants repeatedly emphasized the advantages of convenience and comfort associated with these methods.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Facilitation of participation

According to the school counselors, there was more participation in online activities than in face-to-face ones. For instance, Özge stated:

We found that conducting parent meetings online provided a sense of relief for us. Once familiar with this approach, we could shift entirely to an online platform. This year, I also conducted the Parent Academies Project remotely. We could involve almost sixty parents in monthly sessions, compared to fifteen, if face-to-face meetings were conducted. This approach was beneficial in inviting external professionals who would have otherwise faced difficulties attending physical meetings due to work and time constraints. The accessibility of the Internet to everyone, including parents, has facilitated their participation in school activities. Initially, we faced challenges adapting to this new format, but once parents saw the program's value, they became more eager and actively participated. We observed that parents were more willing to engage in planned activities according to their availability. (Özge, Appendix F, 46)

Similarly, Murat indicated that more parents could attend online parent studies than face-to-face seminars.

The use of technology-facilitated parental involvement. The number of attendees in parent meetings has increased compared to traditional face-to-face training sessions. This shift to technology-based platforms has been advantageous for me regarding parent participation. (Murat, Appendix G, 47)

Buket provided details about her school, whose parents have a low socio-economic status and work long hours, making it difficult to obtain their employers' permission to participate in school activities. This resulted in a significant participation problem and hindered the achievement of the intended goals for the parents. However, these issues were resolved by utilizing online platforms and conducting parent sessions virtually, leading to increased participation rates among the parents.

I am currently employed in the Paşabahçe region in Beykoz, where most parents work physically demanding jobs with heavy workloads. Before the pandemic, they were unable to attend face-to-face meetings or seminars due to busy working hours and lack of leave. Even mothers couldn't answer their phones because most of them worked in factories. This situation led to an important participation problem and the desired targets for the parents could not be achieved. With the pandemic, the

concept of "out of hours" emerged and we made our training more accessible by organizing meetings outside of school hours. More parents were able to participate in our work. This approach continues to be used, especially in individual interviews, when we interview students in their hometowns, for example during the high school choice counseling process (Buket, Appendix F, 48)

Nurgül noted the impact of the online procedure on parental involvement, indicating an increase in participation levels with the implementation of online parent studies.

The online platform provided an excellent opportunity for school counselors, as it facilitated the achievement of their planned work goals.

In terms of parental participation, distance education proved to be advantageous. For instance, face-to-face seminars had low attendance, but the number of participating parents significantly increased when conducted online. This positive outcome prompted the realization that online education is a beneficial platform for engaging parents, even beyond the pandemic. Therefore, even after the pandemic subsides, the option of online education will be continued to ensure improved parental participation. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 49)

Şeyma talked about communicating with students via technological tools or platforms such as Zoom, and online activities decreased the level of technology addiction of students.

In the past, we were able to reach students who did not want to enter the classroom more easily through distance education. For instance, I observed that students with technology addiction have shown more interest in video conversations. I communicated more effectively with these students during the pandemic process. I even received positive feedback from some of my students, such as "My teacher was more enjoyable than coming to school". Also, for example, with technological issues that I sometimes have difficulty with, "Teacher, we have searched for you, we can help." I got messages like such support from students has made our interactions during distance learning more meaningful. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 50)

To summarize, the school counselors reported a rise in parental and student engagement in various activities during the online learning period in contrast to the traditional face-to-face period.

4.2.5. Theme 5: Cybercounseling

With the pandemic, the significance of online psychological counseling increased, and colleagues such as Esra, Buket, and Şeyma highlighted this trend. Esra mentioned how to conduct individual counseling sessions during distance education.

Using technology to conduct individual counseling sessions remotely rather than face-to-face was considered a benefit for us school counselors. We acquired skills in conducting online counseling sessions during this period. (Esra, Appendix F, 51)

Buket, who had been working as a school counselor for about 15 years, found the new approach novel and practical. She believed that it would open new career possibilities for participants.

Throughout this period, I had the opportunity to acquire new counseling methodologies, including online counseling. As a school counselor with 14-15 years of experience, the concept of online counseling was unfamiliar, and I was curious about its effectiveness. However, the pandemic brought new professional opportunities, including implementing online counseling, which became increasingly important. The emergence of online counseling has expanded the scope of our profession and opened up new dimensions for professional growth. (Buket, Appendix F, 52)

According to Şeyma, online counseling sessions were more pleasant for students, as they can control their cameras and enjoy the freedom of opening and closing them.

Frequently, students preferred online counseling over face-to-face sessions, as conveyed by comments such as, "My teacher, online negotiations are much more enjoyable than face-to-face interviews. I wish we could always have our talks online." Their feedback suggested that controlling the opening and closing of cameras provided a sense of personal freedom. It is worth noting that the cameras were mostly open during our psychological counseling sessions. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 53)

Two participants referred to cybercounseling and expressed their belief that it could present opportunities for school counselors.

4.3 Informal learning practices experienced by school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the responses provided by school counselors employed in public middle schools, the third research inquiry concerning the informal learning practices encountered by school counselors amidst the COVID-19 pandemic can be classified into four distinct themes. Table 5 presents informal learning practices experienced by school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5 Informal Learning Practices Experienced by School Counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Practices of informal learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Social media and digitalization		+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	+	+		+	+				+			
Reading and researching						+				+	+	
Social support groups			+					+	+			

Note. The numbers in the first row of the table indicate the sequential numbers of the participants listed in the participants' table alongside their code names. The themes on which the participants expressed their ideas are represented by a plus sign (+) in the corresponding column of the table.

4.3.1 Social media and digitalization

The shift towards online work due to the adoption of distance education transformed the nature of work for counselors. This transition resulted in school counselors being abruptly restricted from providing face-to-face guidance and counseling services, compelling them to acquire novel modes of operation. School counselors resorted to

diverse strategies to adapt to this challenge, including leveraging technology, seeking social support from groups, collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and engaging in extensive reading and research.

Ceyda highlighted that online access to information has been highly advantageous, and independent learning has become imperative for school counselors, as they must discover novel learning experiences independently. By utilizing technology, school counselors can determine the optimal utilization of resources and tools at any given time.

Accessing information online has been a pivotal learning experience for me, as it has placed a wealth of information at our fingertips, readily accessible through our devices. This presents exceptional opportunities to my colleagues who have a focused mind and a clear objective. My first online learning experience can match my sense of loneliness when we are left to ourselves. Less stress always motivates me and pushes me to seek solutions for new resources. That's what happened during the pandemic. The pressure to be productive and helpful in this environment catalyzed a drive to take action, and I was able to accomplish goals that may have taken five years in just one year. (Ceyda, Appendix F, 54)

Kerem emphasized the significance of technology and digitalization in the context of online and distance education methodologies. The advent of numerous free-to-use graphic tools online has enabled school counselors to effectively streamline their online and distance programs by creating various media, including social media posts, presentations, videos, logos, and other visual materials. These tools enabled school counselors to perform their tasks more efficiently and independently acquire the necessary skills to utilize them effectively. While competency in these tools was not mandatory, some school counselors chose to learn and master them alone.

The present period has presented opportunities for growth and progress, as I have been able to incorporate novel methods in my work. Given that videos, presentations, posters, and brochures are more suitably employed online, I have utilized various digital programs to reach out to both children and parents through classroom groups. I have prepared compelling presentations, posters, and videos through these programs and honed my editing skills. As a result, the pandemic has enabled me to

adeptly create visually appealing presentations and posters that capture children's attention, a valuable outcome of this period. (Kerem, Appendix F, 55)

Murat posited that school counselors must familiarize themselves with the processes and practices they typically engage in during face-to-face interactions. The pandemic profoundly impacted school counselors, causing significant personal and professional upheaval. As a result, acquiring new skills and knowledge was imperative, as it was necessary to adapt to the altered landscape of distance education, guidance, and counseling practices. Some counselors endeavored to learn how to navigate this new terrain, emphasizing leveraging Web 2.0 tools to facilitate these processes and streamline guidance and counseling practices.

Through e-school and school psychological counseling service Instagram accounts, I acquired proficiency in utilizing Web 2.0 tools to generate documents. In addition, I created school social media accounts to foster communication with students during this time, which presented its fair share of challenges. However, working from home afforded me greater flexibility and allowed me to devote more time to these tasks. In contrast to the demanding nature of face-to-face counseling sessions, the guidance components of my role were considerably less taxing. They granted me ample opportunity to reflect on innovative approaches to counseling. Consequently, the present circumstances have been advantageous for me in this regard. (Murat, Appendix F, 56)

Murat underscored the importance of integrating digitalization into the guidance and counseling process. Although these digital tools existed before the pandemic and distance education, their utilization among school counselors and schools became more widespread in response to the new situation. For instance, one key example of this was the creation and utilization of Google Forms by counselors. This was crucial because the Directorate of National Education provided certain documents to gather data and identify all students and their parents. As a result, reaching out to multiple students and their parents simultaneously became much easier and more efficient than before the pandemic.

We acquired the skill to use digital forms, specifically Google Forms, for data collection. This significant development enabled us to reach out to more individuals without needing paper-based documentation. For instance, we employed digital School Risk Factors Analysis Forms and Guidance Needs Analysis Forms. While collecting data from 50-100 individuals during face-to-face education was challenging, we reached 300-400 out of 600 students easily last year. This method allowed us to target individuals unavailable during face-to-face meetings, such as primarily made students or those in the 8th grade. The advantage of this method is that it eliminates paper waste. This strategy proved successful, and we intend to continue using digital forms for data collection. (Murat, Appendix F, 57)

Gülin suggested that social media can help monitor the training agenda. This shift towards utilizing social media platforms for educational purposes was primarily attributed to the rise of distance education.

I realized the potential of social media to facilitate access to training materials. The shift towards distance education led to increased social media usage for staying updated with training agendas. I could access announcements and live broadcasts by field professionals by following relevant social media accounts. Additionally, towards the end of the pandemic, I began pursuing a master's degree, and the fact that it was offered online proved highly beneficial. I only attended face-to-face classes once a month, which made it much more manageable. In-service training that usually requires in-person attendance and more effort was now available online, allowing me to acquire significant knowledge. Consequently, the number of training sessions I attended increased thanks significantly to the heightened accessibility facilitated by online education. (Gülin, Appendix F, 58)

Öykü emphasized that they became aware of training opportunities through social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. They were curious and actively sought and searched for knowledge through these channels.

I learned many pieces of training from social media platforms, especially Instagram. The training was announced on the pages I follow on Instagram and even on YouTube in live broadcasts of my various interests. I like learning by actively researching and exploring topics that arouse my curiosity. My interests have completely driven the training sessions I have attended. (Öykü, Appendix F, 59)

Buket mentioned the convenience of knowing that content is available on platforms such as YouTube and realizing that it is accessible at any time, which provided a

sense of comfort to her. Sharing professional knowledge in school counseling through social media platforms became more widespread among school counselors with distance education.

I think accessing information has become oversimplified due to the availability of various videos on YouTube. With increasing guidance and counseling videos on social media platforms, learning has become more comfortable and less anxiety-provoking for school counselors. I observed that when searching for guidance and counseling-related topics on YouTube, many videos are available, which can be accessed at any time. This accessibility may provide a sense of comfort and reduce anxiety levels for learners. I found this experience productive, as it helped me overcome my anxiety and successfully integrate new skills into my profession. (Buket, Appendix F, 60)

Demir pointed out the discovery of new applications, such as Canva, found by chance on an Android phone. Demir elaborated on the process of finding and utilizing these applications. The primary motivational factor for him was curiosity. As he explains in the following excerpt, although there was no compulsion or obligation, Demir engaged in learning activities voluntarily:

I came across new applications, such as Canva, on my Android phone. I learned to create posters, videos, and sound recordings by following online tutorials. These skills were separate from my life before distance education. Rather than any external necessity or obligation, personal curiosity was the main driving force behind my learning. As I gained more experience, I found the process less complicated than I had initially thought, and I realized that many resources were available on platforms like Youtube. I acquired the necessary skills with effort and a few online tutorials. (Demir, Appendix F, 61)

The participants all agree on the modes and methods of learning facilitated by technology and digitalization. They highlighted that digital means serve as a valuable tool for learning alongside traditional ways. Moreover, they stressed that their engagement with technology-enabled learning was motivated by personal interest and not due to any external obligation or requirement.

4.3.2 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Özge emphasized the importance of associations for school counselors, highlighting the various groups and associations that provide community service. School counselors frequently obtain education from these organizations to fulfill their needs and learn about specific topics or issues. In this context, Özge mentioned the Teacher Academies Foundation, which promotes sustainable teacher and school counselor development to ensure children's access to quality education. However, she did not provide specific details about an organization affiliated with this institution.

I participated in a research study organized by the Teacher Academies and the Ministry of National Education. Before the pandemic, I enrolled in the Teacher Academies Foundation program, which promotes sustainable development for teachers and school counselors to ensure children's right to quality education. In the program's first-ever group study, which lasted eight weeks, fifteen psychological counselors participated in person twice a week in Beşiktaş. I became aware of this academy thanks to one of my teachers in Beykoz. A professor from the university provided the training, and it was free of charge. The academy occasionally conducted online sessions using platforms like Zoom, which was an enlightening experience for me. Thanks to my teacher friend, who introduced me to this study, I was able to benefit from such an outstanding program. (Özge, Appendix F, 62)

Ceyda highlighted the importance of the Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association's importance in facilitating school counselors' learning process. The association offers professional and scientific meetings, providing a platform for counselors to enhance their knowledge and skills.

I took the initiative to seek out training opportunities, motivated to find solutions to my challenges. Initially, I received a recommendation for a training program and conducted my research to identify additional options. The Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association also facilitated access to various training programs through which I acquired significant knowledge and skills. (Ceyda, Appendix F, 63)

Murat reported that he acquired new skills in online graphic design tools through the Istanbul Teacher Academies, which offers numerous online tutorials for teachers and

school counselors. It is worth noting that Murat had expressed a need for learning in this area.

I found some free time and pondered how to utilize it productively. During this period, I decided to participate in an online training program offered by the İstanbul Teacher Academies to improve my skills in using Web 2.0 tools. This was a novel area for me, and I was initially unfamiliar with the various graphic design tools available online. The training sessions helped me to gain proficiency in these tools, which included Canva and virtual classrooms, among other things. (Murat, Appendix F, 64)

Similarly, Gülin explained how she acquired information about available training opportunities. According to her, the participants actively followed İstanbul Teacher Academies to stay informed about the latest developments in their fields of interest. As a result, she learned about new and emerging trends in areas such as guidance and counseling training and technology-based education.

I have participated in multiple training sessions organized by the İstanbul Teacher Academies. Our engagement with the Directorate of National Education has consistently revolved around this avenue, facilitating our participation in their training programs. (Gülin, Appendix F, 65)

Nurgül highlighted the importance of İSMEK (İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses), a non-governmental organization, as it fulfilled her learning needs. In addition, she mentioned utilizing MEBBİS (Ministry of National Education Information Systems) to acquire new knowledge and skills.

During the pandemic, I became aware of my inadequacies in technology-related matters and realized the need to improve my skills. Recognizing continuing the process online, I sought to expand my knowledge through various training opportunities, including those provided by the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (İSMEK) and the Ministry of National Education Information Systems (MEBBİS). These courses covered various topics, such as Web 2.0 tools, online game development, and creating interactive content for presentations and seminars. As a result, I gained valuable experience using online platforms for presentations and seminars instead of traditional tools such as PowerPoint. This training has significantly contributed to my professional development during the pandemic, and I continue to improve myself in this area. I believe online content and activities can enhance active participation and interaction with the other

party. I researched independently to find the necessary training to address my learning needs. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 66)

Some participants generally emphasized the significance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Numerous participants explained that they acquired knowledge and skills through NGOs.

4.3.3 Reading and researching

The type of work of school counselors has been significantly impacted by distance education as they have had to transition to online work. Face-to-face guidance and counseling abruptly ceased, and school counselors had to try to learn new work modes. Consequently, they began learning to operate independently in these uncertain and challenging circumstances. Different individuals adapted to these changes in various ways, and one of the strategies employed by some was reading and researching. For instance, Öykü, Demir, and Şeyma resorted to this approach.

Öykü acknowledged that reading is one of the ways that can ease the sudden and challenging transition to distance counseling and guidance, as it provides an opportunity to learn and adapt to new situations.

It posed a significant challenge for me, and I endeavored to bridge the gap by seeking out and acquiring knowledge. Balancing personal and professional demands during this time was arduous. Therefore, I resorted to consistently engaging in reading, watching educational videos, and participating in online training to address the challenge. This was my approach to managing the situation. (Öykü, Appendix F, 67)

Demir emphasized the importance of following a reliable agenda as a potential strategy for overcoming challenges.

Adopting daily news and following reliable sources enabled me to acquire information from credible sources. The benefits of this approach became apparent as I read from foreign websites and social media channels in English. As a result, I obtained accurate and comprehensive information, highlighting the advantages of learning a foreign language

and following an agenda to enhance knowledge and provide precise details. (Demir, Appendix F, 68)

According to Şeyma, individuals with close relations to healthcare workers experienced more serious challenges during this period. Her brother is a doctor, so she experienced high anxiety about his safety and well-being. In addition to the professional challenges, these unanticipated circumstances negatively affected her. Şeyma found relief in learning through reading and research as a coping method. She searched to get accurate information from reliable sources to ease her anxiety.

Initially, my anxiety level was significantly high, and I made a concerted effort to seek out reliable information to alleviate my concerns in dealing with these challenges. Obtaining trustworthy information served as an essential guide to acquiring accurate information. I abstained from accessing information that would exacerbate my anxiety level. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 69)

Buket highlighted that the way of informal learning practice of reading and research could be instrumental in promoting personal and professional growth.

In coping with professional challenges, I tend to shift my focus toward my profession. During the pandemic, I utilized bibliotherapy to improve myself personally and professionally. By reading about my academic field and the pandemic, I could transfer the knowledge gained from past traumatic experiences to the current situation. This method not only helped me refresh my existing knowledge but also enabled me to learn new information. (Buket, Appendix F, 70)

As mentioned earlier, certain school counselors find relief in learning through reading and conducting research to ease their challenges. Furthermore, accessing reliable sources was worthy for counselors to overcome these challenges.

4.3.4 Social support

School counselors acquired knowledge and skills through collaborative learning and social support networks. Given their exposure to traumatic events in their daily work, school counselors often experience adverse effects on their mental health.

Consequently, they require support and supervision on various issues, including coping with unexpected incidents at school, obtaining advice on addressing their problems, and seeking guidance on implementing the counseling plan, necessitating collaboration and assistance from social support groups.

Kerem emphasized the significance of social support groups for school counselors. Cooperation and collaboration among school counselors were deemed more critical and pressing than other professions or branches. Through brainstorming sessions with colleagues, Kerem acknowledged learning new approaches, such as identifying effective strategies or techniques to address specific issues. According to Kerem, social support groups played a vital role in supporting the growth and development of school counselors. By providing a conducive learning environment, these groups or associations facilitated the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the job.

Due to the extended time spent at home during the pandemic, there was an opportunity to learn from various groups and friends. I realized that the cooperation among school counselors is notably high compared to other fields, and as such, a wealth of knowledge was shared among peers. Brainstorming sessions were particularly effective in generating new approaches and solutions to problems. Then, I applied these approaches in preparing presentations and videos and reaching out to children. Hence, I think the significance of various presentation preparation techniques is in enhancing their skills and reaching out to students. (Kerem, Appendix F, 71)

Buket emphasized the significance of social support, acknowledging that we require support and cooperation as human beings. She believes fostering supportive relationships can have positive implications for school counselors.

I received support on technological issues from my family members. For instance, I needed to learn about Zoom and downloading and integrating programs. As I gave birth during the pandemic, I lagged in technological learning compared to others. Fortunately, I had some advantages in terms of family support. My brother and cousins are engineers in technical fields, enabling me to access the necessary information through my relationships. (Buket, Appendix F, 72)

According to Nurgül, she had experience working with school counselors and colleagues as a school counselor.

I did not feel isolated because the challenges I faced as a school counselor were common in other schools. When I communicated with my close friends and colleagues, they shared similar experiences and encountered similar situations. We discovered that there were both positive and negative aspects of the case, which helped alleviate my anxiety. Moreover, we exchanged information frequently and learned from each other's experiences. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 73)

I have a penchant for utilizing technology; however, my technical knowledge could have been more extensive. Technology did not play a crucial role in my life before the pandemic. Nevertheless, voluntary and self-employed training in technology has been beneficial, as it has made my life much easier. The usage of technology helped me in my work, as well as the education and training I received, and aided me in communicating with individuals effectively. For instance, the convenience of online meetings and individual interviews are benefits of technology usage. Although I did not receive compulsory technology training, I discovered its significance during this pandemic. In today's world, being a global citizen necessitates learning software, which I eventually realized. As an illustration, if I considered something internationally, I would require specific software and thus receive some basic training on Python through online means. A friend who lives abroad recommended this course to me, and I found it a unique experience. (Nurgül, Appendix F, 74)

Some participants mentioned social support groups as among the informal learning practices experienced by school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

4.4 Strategies for coping with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic

Based on the responses obtained from school counselors employed in public middle schools, the fourth research question regarding the strategies for coping with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic can be categorized into four themes. Table 6 presents strategies for coping with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 6. Strategies for Coping with the Challenges Posed during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Getting information from reliable sources								+		+	+	
Physical self-care activities	+										+	
Professional solidarity and connectedness			+					+		+		
Maintaining daily routines					+			+				

Note. The numbers in the first row of the table indicate the sequential numbers of the participants listed in the participants' table alongside their code names. The themes on which the participants expressed their ideas are represented by a plus sign (+) in the corresponding column of the table.

4.4.1 Getting information from reliable sources

Öykü suggested that accessing information from reliable sources was more beneficial, ensuring accurate and verified information. She identified reliable sources such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education, and university websites.

During the difficult period, I began following the agenda set by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education, and the universities websites. Moreover, I came across Istanbul Teacher Academies on Instagram and attended their online training sessions. As I searched for ways to cope, I discovered eTwinning, a digital platform for teachers. I joined the eTwinning project and engaged in digital activities, which enhanced my digital literacy and made me a more conscious digital citizen. (Öykü, Appendix F, 75)

Demir emphasized that adopting an agenda derived from reliable sources could be crucial to meeting challenges.

I acquired information from credible, readily available sources by adhering to the agenda. Access to foreign websites and channels written in English enabled me to read and obtain information from foreign sources on social media. Consequently, I have realized the advantages of

proficiency in a foreign language. It facilitated my ability to read and keep abreast of the agenda, enabling me to acquire and disseminate accurate information. (Demir, Appendix F, 76)

In Şeyma's case, individuals with close ties to healthcare personnel faced more significant challenges during this period. Şeyma, who has a brother that works as a doctor, experienced heightened anxiety regarding his safety and well-being, worsening the already existing professional difficulties. To cope with these difficulties, Şeyma felt a sense of relief by reading and researching to get reliable and beneficial information from reliable sources.

Primarily, I experienced heightened levels of anxiety, which prompted me to seek out credible information to alleviate the distress associated with coping with these challenges. Accessing trustworthy information was paramount in obtaining accurate information, which was a critical guide in my quest for reliable information. As a precautionary measure, I refrained from accessing information that could trigger my anxiety. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 77)

Three participants mentioned accessing information from reliable sources as among the Strategies for Coping with the Challenges Posed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4.2 Physical self-care activities (Body & mind wellness/Meditation practices)

Professionals in social and healthcare services are vulnerable to psychosocial stress, which became increasingly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study shows that engaging in physical self-care activities is an effective strategy for coping with challenging life circumstances, such as psychosocial stress.

In Özge's case, mindfulness was identified as a potential physical self-care activity to cope with the difficulties stemming from the pandemic and distance learning. As a school counselor, Özge introduced a mindfulness program to her and

her students, benefiting both parties. Seeing the positive result of this activity on her students further supported Özge's belief in its effectiveness as a self-care activity.

At the onset of the pandemic, I initially struggled to cope with the difficulties. Subsequently, I implemented a strategy involving mindfulness exercises with children. Having previously participated in a group study on mindfulness, I used this experience to address my anxiety about remaining at home and planning for an uncertain future. Initially, I engaged in an 8-week trial process consisting of daily 20-minute body scanning and breathing exercises. I then attempted to create small groups with children, specifically 8th-grade students, who were experiencing stress due to both the pandemic and their upcoming exams. Every two days, we conducted various mindfulness activities through Zoom, lasting between 15 and 20 minutes. The impact of these exercises was highly positive, providing coping mechanisms for stress and helping to raise awareness in children. I managed my sleep problems by continuing with mindfulness and breathing exercises. Although we could not conduct the training for the entire eight weeks with the children, it proved helpful for them and me in dealing with the difficulties brought on by the pandemic. (Özge, Appendix F, 78)

Şeyma emphasized the importance of mindfulness as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Specifically, she frequently engaged in the activity known as the "safe place."

As a coping strategy, I resorted to meditation during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In particular, the "safe place" exercise was the most frequently used method, which involved contemplating a location that induced relaxation and focusing on my internal thought processes. This technique proved helpful for me during distance education and pandemic-related stress. (Şeyma, Appendix F, 79)

In conclusion, the participants of this study identified mindfulness as a potentially valuable activity for promoting overall wellness. Nurturing physical and mental health is vital for school counselors, especially during the highly stressful COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4.3 Professional solidarity and connectedness

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, school counselors faced challenging circumstances as mental health care professionals and required support. This study suggests that

professional solidarity and connectedness could be helpful strategies that they utilized.

Kerem emphasized the importance of professional solidarity and connectedness as school counselors supported each other in times of need and helped each other when they encountered challenging situations. Moreover, Kerem highlighted how they learned from each other's behaviors when faced with difficulties.

At the onset of the pandemic, as school counselors, we met challenging circumstances and required support. Solidarity was essential for us. I realized the power of peer solidarity, observing that school counselors provided mutual support to each other when faced with difficulties. Additionally, I realized that we learned from each other's behaviors during these times. I also believed in the effectiveness of peer solidarity and engaged in it with school principals and teachers. I relied on each other's support and conducted our work through mutual aid. I also applied this method with children, creating groups of students with similar academic levels. We determined what each student needed to learn and worked as a team. Through this process, I learned a lot from their students. (Kerem, Appendix F, 80)

Buket emphasized the importance of support for colleagues. They mentioned that there were times when they were required to learn new skills, and their colleagues provided them with the necessary support and resources.

During that time, I obtained assistance from my colleagues in establishing and operating the Education Information Network (EBA) and forming the Ministry of National Education's Central Education Information System (MEBBİS) to cope with challenges. My colleagues helped me technically in these meetings. We received no training and necessary knowledge entirely through our efforts. (Buket, Appendix F, 81)

Demir identified the significance of coordination among school counselors, administrators, and other staff within the school. This cooperation and support were quite beneficial for school counselors. Demir further claimed that school counselors involved in program planning and stakeholder partnership (among parents, teachers, and school principals) also function as adult educators. Thus, their involvement in

the program requires a sense of solidarity to accomplish their responsibilities effectively.

Providing guidance services necessitates a cohesive collaboration between counselors, the school administration, and other pertinent stakeholders within the educational institution. In this regard, I have received substantial assistance from the class guidance teachers, with whom I established a relationship with stakeholders. This collaboration entailed mutual support and a shared responsibility to execute our duties. To illustrate this point, we provided an analogy of a chair, emphasizing that the attainment of our objectives was reliant on the collective effort of each stakeholder, much like how each leg of the chair is integral to its stability. Hence, it is imperative for all parties involved to foster a sense of solidarity and cooperation toward achieving our shared goals. (Demir, Appendix F, 82).

As per the participants' accounts, school counselors encounter various challenges throughout their workday, often requiring a collective effort and a sense of solidarity. Additionally, one of the participants mentioned the role of school counselors as adult educators within the school setting.

4.4.4 Maintaining regular routines

Öykü highlighted that maintaining a regular routine is important to cope with the pandemic. To this end, she extended extra effort to establish new habits by preparing for them as if she were going to work, as though life outside was going on as usual. Additionally, engaging in physical exercise, cooking, and spending quality time with family were all therapeutic activities that she found beneficial.

The disruption of my daily routine was a profound change that I found challenging to manage. During this period, I realized that adhering to certain habits, such as waking up early and applying makeup, facilitated my daily tasks. To adapt to the pandemic, I attempted to establish new routines by preparing for them as if commuting to my workplace, as though my life outside had not been significantly affected. In addition, I engaged in more cooking and quality family time, as did many others. By creating a new routine that introduced an alternative element into my life, I endeavored to safeguard my mental health. (Öykü, Appendix F, 83)

One participant mentioned maintaining regular routines as among the strategies for coping with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.5 Summary of research questions and related themes

In the current study, seventeen (17) themes emerged and are presented in the findings section. There were seventeen (17) themes; four (4) themes emerged under the title of difficulties, five (5) themes under the title of opportunities, four (4) themes under the title of informal learning, and four (4) themes under the title of strategies to cope with difficulties. The research questions and associated themes that emerged from the data analyses are summarized in Table-7.

Table 7. Research Questions and Themes That Emerged from The Analyses

Research Questions	Themes
<p>What are the perceived challenges for school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adverse effects on well-being ● Communication difficulties ● Technology adaptation challenges ● Difficulties in the professional-vocational process
<p>What are the perceived opportunities for school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Time and location flexibility ● Self-initiated professional development opportunities ● Convenience and comfort ● Facilitation of participation ● Cybercounseling
<p>What kind of learning practices (informal) has school counselors experienced during the COVID-19 Pandemic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social media and digitalization ● Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ● Reading and researching ● Social support
<p>How have school counselors struggled with the difficulties they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Getting information from reliable sources ● Physical self-care activities ● Professional solidarity and connectedness ● Maintaining regular routines

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As Yılmaz (2019) stated, changing conditions create new needs for school counselors. These needs also created new learning areas, mostly involving self-directed informal learning. Thus, this study attempted to investigate school counselors' experiences regarding challenges, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research on distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic is diverse regarding the research questions that were attempted to address. While some studies investigated the challenges of distance education during the pandemic, as in Aytaç and Tufan's (2021) study, some other studies investigated the opportunities, as in Moore and Fodrey's (2018) study. Yet, some studies such as Toquero's (2020); Östlund's (2005); Adedoyin and Soykan's (2023) studies looked into both the difficulties and the opportunities that arise from the perspective of school counselors, as in the current study. The current study, like O'Connell and Lucić, L. (2021)'s study, focuses on informal learning experiences and strategies to cope with difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section will discuss the study's findings with relevant literature. Finally, the conclusion, limitations, implications, and recommendations for further research will be presented.

5.1 Findings of the study

5.1.1 The challenges faced by school counselors during distance education

The current study identified several key challenges, such as the difficulties faced by school counselors, which include adverse effects on well-being, communication

difficulties, technology adaptation challenges, and job-related professional issues. Kecojevic et al. (2020), Košir et al. (2022), Liu et al. (2021), Khan et al. (2020), Litam et al. (2021), Karaman et al. (2021), Akgul et al. (2021), Strear et al. (2021), Güney and Yalçın (2023), Pincus et al. (2020) studies, similar findings emerged. The results will be analyzed on a theme-by-theme basis.

First, the well-being issue is crucial for school counselors (Kecojevic et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020). School counselors cannot maintain their well-being and protect their mental health (Karaman et al., 2021), so they cannot support those seeking help. While trying to protect their well-being, they encountered multiple personal and professional challenges, as mentioned in the introduction by Akgul et al. (2021). In the current study, participants mentioned that with the transition to distance education with the pandemic, the psychological burden of school counselors exceeded significantly compared to face-to-face education. On the one hand, like everyone else, they were trying to cope with the uncertainty created by the pandemic and manage concerns such as stress and anxiety that their students and parents put on them due to their job. In their study, Košir et al. (2022), Liu et al. (2021), Khan et al. (2020), and Litam et al. (2021) also found out that school professionals who reported caring for their children during school closure experienced higher stress. In addition, school counselors have suffered and had higher anxiety, fear, and anger due to the COVID-19 pandemic; as mentioned and confirmed in the introduction, the findings are parallel with Karaman's claims (2021).

Communication problems were another main challenge. Strear et al. (2021) claimed that staying connected to students and parents was important during distance education. It became challenging for school counselors to reach students and parents in that process. This finding parallels a previous report (Sari and Nayır, 2020) that

stated the inability to reach students revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the reasons why school counselors have communication problems with students and parents may be that they do not know how and in which ways to reach them. In addition, Strear et al. (2021) mentioned that some students and families may not have a hardware device such as a phone, tablet, computer, or internet connection due to economic reasons. In addition, the fact that not only students and parents but also some school counselors do not have hardware devices and have insufficient internet connection may also have caused communication problems.

Technology adaptation challenges were another major challenge mentioned by most participants in the current study. School counselors had adaptation problems to the changes brought by distance education, which is a new and unfamiliar experience for students, parents, administrators, and school counselors. In parallel with the present results, Aytaç and Tufan (2021) and Strear et al. (2021) proposed they initially encountered difficulties adapting to technology during the early stages of distance education. As Güney and Yalçın (2023) mentioned, school counselors had especially technical and hardware problems related to the internet connection. In the early days of distance education, school counselors were not ready for distance education in terms of technology.

Job-related professional difficulties were another major challenge. Counselors stated that because preparation or program should be made for using EBA (Educational Information Network), which complicates their work as school counselors, other teachers quickly register their courses through EBA. An appointment system could be opened for school counselors on EBA. If this system was active, students could reach their counselors easily and through an official channel. In addition, school counselors expressed their concerns about the need to

get more support from the school administration in conducting and organizing the distance education process. Although Pincus et al. (2020) stated that school counselors could consult their administrators and get support when they need it, in this study, it is seen that school counselors receive insufficient support from the administrations in conducting their work remotely, especially in the first days of distance education. While the school administrations expect things to work like when the school is open in the early days of distance education without any planning process, as said by Turan et al. (2022), it could be concluded that the administration may not have provided the information and environment needed in this regard. Even some participants stated that they felt like they were forgotten by the management in this process. This may be because the academic achievement expectations of the administration, teachers, and parents of the schools included in the research are generally higher than the expectations of social-emotional development. However, Hammer et al. (2018)'s study, which was conducted with primary and middle school students, shows that the child's social-emotional status affects their academic progress.

5.1.2 Opportunities arisen for school counselors during distance education

The study has identified various critical concepts, including the opportunities experienced by school counselors, which include time and location flexibility, self-initiated professional development opportunities, reduced bullying among students, convenience and comfort, and facilitated accessibility and participation opportunities. Although in Turan et al. (2022), Rahman et al. (2020), Pangelinan (2021), Rudolph et al. (2017), Catalano et al. (2021), and Berge's (2013) studies,

similar findings emerged; the results of Keogh- Brown (2010)'s study was not similar and parallel. The results will be explained theme by theme.

Flexibility and saving time are significant opportunities for school counselors during distance education. The theme parallels Turan et al. (2022) research results, which is that through internet technology, distance education provides higher education faculty members and students with flexible learning opportunities in terms of time, location, and learning speed. School counselors could join them from anywhere with an internet connection and a device, especially when schools are closed. This finding was also reported by Pangelinan (2021) that school counselors regulate their counseling practices. The current study's findings indicate that distance education offers school counselors flexible learning opportunities in terms of time and location through virtual environments. Also, the findings show that the advantages of attending seminars, taking courses, and pursuing a master's degree through distance education were easier than before the pandemic. In addition, conducting a master's remotely and completing the program did not require physical being at the university. Distance education could provide an opportunity to remote learners in terms of time and location and to be independent of time and location.

Another finding in the current study is that distance education provides opportunities for self-initiated professional development for school counselors. Self-initiated professional development theme is parallel to Rahman et al. (2020), Turan et. all (2022), and Pangelinan's (2021) research, which highlighted that distance education gives a chance to teachers self-initiated professional development. In this context, it could be said that school counselors could attend much online training and education. According to findings, accessing information has become easier, and this situation could contribute to school counselors' personal and professional growth.

Another finding in the current study is that distance education creates convenience and comfort for school counselors. The finding also reported by Dinh and Nguyen (2022) that distance education provided convenience and comfort to social work students in an educational institution in Vietnam regarding traveling and time schedules. This study also mentioned convenience and comfort as opportunities for school counselors. For instance, one participant indicated that online school trips were a practical alternative for middle school students during the pandemic and distance education. Although before the pandemic, high school trips were possible with fewer students due to logistical constraints, distance education allowed counselors to organize virtual visits to high schools for every student. Therefore, online school trips serve as a convenient opportunity for this challenge. Therefore, it could be said that distance education could facilitate doing the same work with less effort and involve more students.

Facilitation of participation is another finding on opportunities for distance education. According to participants, there was more participation in online activities than in face-to-face sessions. This finding is similar to Berge's (2013) research, and it is claimed that the online platform provided an opportunity for school counselors, as it facilitated the achievement of their planned work goals. The current study's findings also indicate parents have a low socio-economic status and work long hours, making it difficult to obtain their employers' permission to participate in school parenting activities. Although this may have resulted in a significant participation problem and hindered the achievement of the intended goals for the parents in face-to-face education, it is claimed that with distance education, this problem was overcome by offering optional time and day by school counselors. However, there are contrary results in the literature. As claimed in the research carried out by

Keogh- Brown (2010), according to OECD reports, when the distance education process is analyzed in a socio-economic context, it is argued that inequalities between students from different demographic groups are more visible. Because it is thought that students with privileged backgrounds can easily cover the deficiencies encountered, while students with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are expected to have difficulties at this point. In this direction, it can be expected that the participation rate of parents from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in the distance education process will be low, as the parents of students are likely to encounter similar difficulties. In Catalano et al. (2021)'s study, similar results emerged in this line. In the current study, these issues were resolved by utilizing online platforms and conducting parent sessions virtually, leading to increased participation rates among the parents. Another participant noted the impact of the online procedure on parental involvement, indicating an increase in participation levels with the implementation of online parent studies.

Cybercounseling is another finding on opportunities for distance education. In other words, online counseling is one of the findings that school counselors see as an opportunity during distance education. The research finding of Yılmaz (2019) also parallels the current study's results that cybercounseling is an advantage in terms of continuous services. Yılmaz (2019)'s research on continuous services could be defined as a reliable partnership that enables an uninterrupted, ongoing counseling process through cybercounseling. However, the American Counseling Association (ACA) (2014), McAdams and Wyatt (2010), Mallen and Vogel (2005) Miller and Gergen (1998) noted the disadvantages of cyber counseling, such as the need for satisfactory preparation, mechanical knowledge, adequate specialized computer access, and support for the untrained have also been brought up. However, when

looked at in total, it can be said that it is beneficial for uninterrupted service in extraordinary situations.

5.1.3 Informal learning practices experienced by school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study identified various key sources for informal learning practices, which are social media and digitalization, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social support, and reading and researching. Strear et al. (2021), Donaldson (2011), He and Li (2019), Mason and Rennie (2007), Villares et al. (2022), Appe and Schnable (2019), Ghaith (2002), and Pangelinan's (2021) studies, similar findings emerged. The results will be explained on a theme-by-theme basis.

Among the findings of this research is the theme of social media and digitalization, which is one of the ways for school counselors to acquire informal learning experiences. Strear et al. (2021) and Donaldson's (2011) research claimed that as the communication capabilities of internet-enabled devices increase, the chances of collaboration, resource access, and context-aware problem-solving also increase. The research findings of He and Li (2019) align with this study's results, and the role of digital competence in the context of informal learning, which was rarely considered in previous studies in terms of learning, was introduced and emphasized in the research. The emergence of many free online graphic tools from the current study has allowed school counselors to effectively organize their online and remote programs by creating various media, including social media posts, presentations, videos, logos, and other visual materials. Similar results were also reported by Mason and Rennie (2007) that to promote community development for a recently founded Land Trust on the Isle of Lewis in Northwest Scotland, this article

addresses the informal learning of Web 2.0 technology. School counselors stated that they experienced these learning experiences with purely intrinsic motivation in a self-regulated and self-directed manner. Although this learning area is not compulsory, some school counselors have chosen to learn and master non-counseling tasks, as Villares et al. (2022) argue.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also another important way of informal learning practice for school counselors. The current study emphasized that school counselors frequently obtain education from these organizations to fulfill their needs and learn about specific topics or issues. These results align with those of Appe and Schnable (2019), who claimed that NGOs have an important role in learning.

Reading and researching is the last finding regarding the informal learning experiences of school counselors. The finding that reading is one of the ways that can ease the sudden and challenging transition to distance counseling and guidance, as it provides an opportunity to learn and adapt to new situations, is parallel to that found in Pangelinan's (2021) research.

Social support is another way of experiencing informal learning with school counselors. In parallel with the present findings, Barratt and Duran (2021) have proposed that participants emphasized the significance of social support for school counselors. Cooperation and collaboration among school counselors could be critical. Through brainstorming sessions with colleagues, they acknowledged learning new approaches, such as identifying effective strategies or techniques to address specific problems. Parallel with the current study's findings, in Ghaith's (2002) research, it was found that there is a positive relationship between cooperative learning and the degree of academic support provided by teachers and success. Likewise, the research

revealed that cooperative learning was positively associated with perceived degrees of academic and personal support provided by teachers and peers. According to the current study's participants, social support groups played a vital role in promoting the growth and development of school counselors. By providing a conducive learning environment, these groups or associations facilitated the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the job.

5.1.4 Strategies for coping with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic

The study has identified several crucial concepts, including the strategies for coping with difficulties experienced by school counselors, encompassing the themes of accessing information from reliable sources, physical self-care activities, peer solidarity, and others (bibliotherapy-maintaining daily routines). Kecojevic et al. (2020), Harrichand et al. (2021), and Widha et al. (2021)'s studies, similar findings emerged. The results will be explained on a theme-by-theme basis.

Among the findings of this research is the theme of getting information from reliable sources, which is one of the strategies for coping with the challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In parallel with the present results, Kecojevic et al. (2020) have proposed that reliable sources are essential for coping with challenges posed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerns about safety and well-being during distance education strained school counselors. Obtaining reliable and accurate information from reliable sources to deal with these downsides was relieved.

Physical self-care activities are another strategy for coping with difficulties. Self-care is defined as a healthy action or activity that a person does for themselves to recharge and replenish by Gentry (2002) and Harrichand et al. (2021) claimed that

self-care activities are important for dealing with COVID-19 pandemic difficulties. And also, as mentioned in Lailatul Widha et al. (2021)'s research regarding coping with COVID-19, mindfulness can be an effective way to strengthen psychological well-being. Mindfulness was identified as a potential physical self-care activity to address the difficulties arising from the pandemic and distance education. One participant mentioned introducing a mindfulness program to her and her students, benefiting both parties. Witnessing the positive impact of this intervention on her students further reinforced the participant's belief in its efficacy as a self-care activity.

Professional solidarity and connectedness is the last strategy for coping with the challenges for school counselors. Participants emphasized the importance of professional solidarity and connectedness as school counselors supported each other in times of need and helped each other when they encountered challenging situations. This finding was also reported by Di Napoli et al. (2021) that, as in disaster conditions, the sense of community is essential for protecting communities' well-being. As mentioned by McMillan and Chavis (1986), a feeling that members belong, that they are necessary to each other and to the group, and a shared confidence that members' needs can be met through a commitment to being together.

The themes of maintaining regular routines are among the findings of this research. Liu et al. (2021)'s research findings are also in line with these findings, and the research shows that routines can give children a sense of predictability and security at home and develop a sense of control over daily schedules.

5.2 Conclusion of the study

The COVID-19 Pandemic profoundly affected school counselors as well as everyone else. As mental health workers, they faced many different challenges during the pandemic, such as adverse effects on well-being, communication difficulties, technology adaptation challenges, and difficulties in the professional-vocational process. School counselors also experienced high anxiety levels due to being overwhelmed while simultaneously supporting students, parents, and even school staff, particularly teachers and occasionally administrators.

In this process, they felt left alone and lonely, and suffered more than everyone else, as they could not get the support they needed with the increasing burden of anxiety and responsibility. So, they needed swift and practical solutions for their challenges. MacKeracher (2004) describes this situation as adult learners often acquire knowledge swiftly and continue with their lives. Consequently, school counselors tried to solve their problems through informal learning channels to meet their learning needs. Informal learning is embedded in experience-oriented, daily life activities that can take place in various contexts and forms (Marsick & Neaman, 2018). It can be intentionally or unintentionally encouraged (Sarkan, 2021). Reed and Loughran (1984) describe informal learning environments as beyond school settings. Self-motivation is important for informal learning because self-motivation has a facilitative effect on difficulties. After all, it initiates self-directed learning as an action.

Self-directed learning is a critical concept for informal learning involving autonomous learning. In self-directed learning, the learner takes charge of the learning process. Adult learners consciously and intentionally take control of their learning, setting their objectives, conducting research, determining how they will

learn, which methods to employ, and evaluating their learning processes (Brockett & Hiemstra,1991).

According to Baker et al. (2020), periods of upheaval are no longer infrequent occurrences in our rapidly evolving world; rather, they have become the norm. Antonacopoulou (2018) describes these ongoing circumstances using the acronym VUCA, which stands for vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, summarizing our current context. In fulfilling their responsibilities, the participants of this study faced the different effects of complexity, changing work contexts, unexpected circumstances, and changes in their schools. The pace of change participants had to deal with was accelerating, and their ability to learn and adapt under these circumstances was critical. These ongoing changes and challenges created contextual factors that influenced their informal learning experiences. They developed new knowledge, skills, perspectives, and behaviors to deal with challenges, adapted to new needs, and moved on with their lives.

In this direction, it could be recommended to provide support mechanisms, plan in-service training programs in line with online needs assessment, organizes programs to meet material needs, and develop support networks. Based on the research findings, it can be said that social media and digitalization, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), reading and researching, and social support are important learning outcomes for informal learning experiences of school counselors while coping with challenges. Understanding individual learning needs and surrounding factors, analyzing necessary resources and processes through the lens of adult education, and designing adult learning for school counselors are essential.

As a result, the difficulties and opportunities experienced by school counselors may increase daily. Sudden and unanticipated disasters such as the

COVID-19 pandemic may always take place. Therefore, it may be necessary to be prepared for such situations. The significance of informal learning as well as self-directed learning grows as individuals transition from high school to graduate school and life since it can take place at any time and any place (Chen and Bryer, 2012). Today, learning is easier with the development of technology. In addition, as the difficulties increase, strategies to cope with these difficulties are also developing.

5.3 Limitations of the study

There are some limitations associated with this study. The first limitation is related to generalizability. The qualitative research design for the research was carried out with school counselors. Participants are selected according to purposeful sampling. Participants shared their personal experiences by answering the questions in the semi-structured interview form. Since this is a qualitative research study designed according to the decisions taken by the researcher, none of the findings can be generalized to other people other than the target group or even to other professionals working as school counselors. The findings are only valid for school counselors working in the region selected according to predetermined criteria.

Second, researcher positionality may be a limitation. Like the participants, the researcher is a school counselor working in a public middle school. Although the researcher aimed to look at this research from the perspective of an adult educator by getting rid of the psychological counseling role, she may have had difficulty drawing this boundary occasionally without realizing it.

Third, the aim of the study was, from the beginning, to reveal informal learning experiences beyond challenges and opportunities. The questions in the interview form focused on understanding the informal learning experiences of the

participants. However, the participants did not disclose their formal learning experiences. Individual factors related to formal learning that may affect informal learning experiences are excluded. However, it is also worth noting that; it took a lot of work to collect data by clearly separating informal learning experiences from formal learning experiences.

5.4 Implications of the study

This study provided information about school counselors' difficulties, opportunities, informal learning experiences, and coping strategies with difficulties during the COVID-19 distance education process. School counselors working in public schools in Turkey should be aware that they must go beyond being just psychological counselors and are also adult educators. It should be realized that professional expectations are increasing daily, creating new needs, and the importance of personal, self-directed, and informal learning will rise to meet these needs.

Changing conditions bring along professional challenges and opportunities. In addition to the increase in workload with professional expectations, some opportunities also arise with technological developments. Technological developments make accessing information and participating in training easier regardless of time and place. In this sense, the importance of increasing technology knowledge is growing daily. This study showed that school counselors may need to develop different skill sets.

Another implication is that as the role of school counselors as adult educators become increasingly essential, some strategies will be needed to cope with the challenges of the increasing workload. In this sense, providing supervision support to school psychological counselors will become even more critical in the coming days.

However, until this happens, school counselors could keep utilizing practices such as getting information from reliable sources, self-care activities, professional physical solidarity, and connectedness.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

First, because this is a qualitative study, the findings are limited to the data collected from thirteen school counselors. Therefore, conducting a study with a larger sample size is essential to generalize the results. It could be possible to carry out research utilizing quantitative or mixed method design. This may allow more comprehensive and in-depth results on challenges, opportunities, and informal learning experienced by school counselors.

Secondly, this research was conducted with school counselors working in public schools. Comparative studies of school counselors working in public schools and school counselors working in private schools can be conducted in further research.

Finally, ethnographic studies could be conducted to better understand the learning dynamics in the distance education process and how they affect the informal learning of school counselors.

APPENDIX A

APPROVAL OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR MASTER'S AND PHD THESES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 14.06.2022-70696

T.C.
BOĞAZIÇI ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME
KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı : 32
Toplantı Tarihi : 26.05.2022
Toplantı Saati : 10:00
Toplantı Yeri : Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar : Prof. Dr. Ebru Kaya, Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı, Doç. Dr. Arhan S. Ertan, Doç. Dr. Senem Yıldız,
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen
Bulunmayanlar :

Gözde Demir Ertuğrul
Eğitim Bilimleri

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"Informal Learning Experiences of School Counselors During the Covid-19 Pandemic" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığımız SBB-EAK 2022/63 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 26 Mayıs 2022 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. COVID-19 önlemleri kapsamında kurul üyelerinden ıslak imza alınmadığı için bu onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen tarafından bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin
SOHTORİK İLKMEN
ÜYE

e-İmzalıdır
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik
İlkmen
Öğretim Üyesi
Raportör

SOBETİK 32 26.05.2022

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH)

Institution supporting the research: Boğaziçi University / Educational Sciences

Department

Name of the study: Informal Learning Experiences of School Counselors During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Project Coordinator: Assoc. Prof. H. Ayşe Caner

E-mail address: xxxxx@boun.edu.tr

Phone: 0XXX XXX XXXX

Name of the researcher: Gözde Demir Ertuğrul

E-mail address: xxxxxxxxxxxx@boun.edu.tr

Phone: 0 XXX XXX XXXX

Dear Participant,

Boğaziçi University Educational Sciences graduate student Gözde Demir Ertuğrul, within the scope of her master's thesis, Assoc. Dr., under the consultancy of H. Ayşe Caner, “Informal Learning Experiences of School Counselors During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” is conducting a research project. This study aims to determine and investigate the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic period.

If you agree to participate in the study, interview questions will begin. The interview takes approximately 30 minutes. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, interviews will be

held online if necessary. Interviews will be recorded with a voice recorder with your consent.

If the interviews are conducted face-to-face, with your approval, a voice recorder will be recorded. If the interviews are conducted online via Zoom, audio and video recordings will be taken with your consent. If you do not want to approve the audio and video recording, the interviews with you will be recorded by taking notes. Your personal information will be kept confidential in this research. The information received from you will be kept in an encrypted file on the researcher's personal computer. Your name will not be taken in the interviews, and you will be given a code name instead of your own name and the data will be analyzed with this code name. Access to the data will be open only to the researcher. The data will be analyzed in aggregate and anonymously. This research will be conducted for a scientific purpose and the data will be presented only in a scientific environment (conference, congress, etc.).

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You will not be paid any fees if you participate in the study. You can opt out of participating in the study at any time. In this case, the sample we have received from you will be destroyed. The research we want to do is not expected to pose any risk to you.

Before signing this form, please ask if you have any questions about the study. If you have any questions later, you can reach the research team by calling 0 XXX XXX XXXX. You can also consult your local ethics committees about your rights regarding research. You can consult Boğaziçi University Human Research Institutional Evaluation Board (İNAREK) about your rights or complaints regarding the research, via the e-mail address xxxxxxxxxxxx@boun.edu.tr or by calling (+XX) XXX XXX XXXX.)

I understood what was told to me and what was written above. I have/do not want to have a copy of this form (in which case the researcher keeps this copy).

I agree to participate in the study.

I approve the recording of audio and video during the interviews.

Participant Name-Surname:

Signature:

E-mail address*:

Date (day/month/year):/...../.....

* If you want to know the result of the research, please share your e-mail address with us.

* If you do not have the opportunity to sign this form digitally, in response to the e-mail address to which this form was sent to you, "I understood what was explained to me and what was written above. I have/do not want to receive a copy of this form (in which case the researcher keeps this copy). I agree to participate in the study." write as.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM (TURKISH)

KATILIMCI BİLGİ ve ONAM FORMU

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi / Eğitim Bilimleri Yüksek Lisans Programı

Araştırmanın adı: Okul Psikolojik Danışmanlarının COVID-19 Pandemisi Boyunca Yaşadıkları Enformel Öğrenme Deneyimleri

Proje Yürütücüsü: Doç. Dr. H. Ayşe Caner

E-posta adresi: xxxxx@boun.edu.tr

Telefon: 0XXX XXX XXXX

Araştırmacının adı: Gözde Demir Ertuğrul

E-posta adresi: xxxxxxxxxxxx@boun.edu.tr

Telefon: 0 XXX XXX XXXX

Sayın Katılımcı,

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri yüksek lisans öğrencisi Gözde Demir Ertuğrul, yüksek lisans tezi kapsamında Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. H. Ayşe Caner'in danışmanlığında "Okul Psikolojik Danışmanlarının COVID-19 Pandemisi Döneminde Yaşadıkları Enformel Öğrenme Deneyimleri" başlıklı bir araştırma projesi yürütmektedir. Bu çalışmada okul psikolojik danışmanlarının COVID-19

Pandemisi dönemindeki enformel öğrenme deneyimlerini belirlemek ve arařtırmak amaçlanmaktadır.

Çalıřmaya katılmayı kabul ettiđiniz takdirde görüřme sorularına bařlanacaktır.

Görüřme yaklaşık 30 dakika sürmektedir. COVID-19 salgını nedeniyle görüřmeler ihtiyaç duyulduđunda çevrimiçi ortamda yapılacaktır.

Görüřmelerin yüz yüze yürütülmesi halinde sizin onayınızla ses kayıt cihazı ile ses kaydı alınacaktır. Görüřmelerin zoom aracılıđıyla online olarak yürütülmesi halinde sizin onayınızla ses ve video kaydı alınacaktır. Ses ve video kaydına onay vermek istemezseniz sizinle yapılacak görüřmeler not tutularak kaydedilecektir. Bu arařtırmada kiřisel bilgileriniz gizli tutulacaktır. Sizden alınan bilgiler arařtırmacının kiřisel bilgisayarında řifreli bir dosyada tutulacaktır. Görüřmelerde isminiz alınmayacak ve kendi isimleriniz yerine size kod isim verilecektir ve veriler bu kod ismiyle analiz edilecektir. Verilere eriřim sadece arařtırmacıya açık olacaktır. Veriler toplu halde ve anonim olarak analiz edilecektir. Bu arařtırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılacaktır ve veriler yalnızca bilimsel bir ortamda (konferans, kongre vs.) sunulacaktır.

Çalıřmaya katılmanız tamamen gönüllülük esaslıdır. Çalıřmaya katılmanız durumunda size herhangi bir ücret ödenmeyecektir. İstedięiniz zaman çalıřmaya katılmaktan vazgeçebilirsiniz. Bu durumda sizden almıř olduđumuz örnek imha edilecektir. Yapmak istediđimiz arařtırmanın size risk getirmesi beklenmemektedir. Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalıřmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun. Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, proje yürütücüsüne (Ofis Telefonu: 0XXX XXX XXXX) sorabilirsiniz. Arařtırma ile ilgili haklarınız konusunda veya řikâyetleriniz için Bođaziçi Üniversitesi İnsan Arařtırmaları Kurumsal Deđerlendirme Kurulu'na

(İNAREK) Kuruluna xxxxxxxxxxx@boun.edu.tr mail adresinden ya da (+XX) XXX XXX XXXX nolu telefondan danışabilirsiniz.

Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Bu formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Görüşmeler sırasında ses ve görüntü kaydı alınmasını onaylıyorum.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı:

İmzası:

E-posta adresi*:

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):/...../.....

*Eğer araştırma sonucunu öğrenmek istiyorsanız lütfen e-posta adresinizi bizimle paylaşınız.

* Eğer bu formu dijital bir şekilde imzalama imkânınız yoksa, bu formun size gönderildiği e-mail adresine cevap olarak “Bana anlatılanları ve yukarıda yazılanları anladım. Bu formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar). Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.” şeklinde yazınız.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW FORM (ENGLISH)

The Interview Guide

This interview is conducted as part of the master's research on the informal learning experiences of school counselors during the COVID-19 Pandemic period. The information collected will not be used for any other purpose. The information regarding the school counselors participating in the research will be kept confidential, and no personal information will be made public. The interview is expected to take thirty (30) minutes.

- 1) How many years of school counseling experience do you have?
- 2) How many years of school counseling experience at your last school?
- 3) What is your educational status in the field of school counseling?
- 4) Have you faced any difficulties during the COVID-19 Pandemic period? Could you give an example of the challenges you faced during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 5) How have you dealt with these challenges?
- 6) Have you faced any opportunities during the COVID-19 Pandemic period? If any, how have you used these opportunities for school counseling settings?
- 7) Have you perceived any needs as a school counselor during the COVID-19 pandemic? If yes, please tell me these needs. What kind of learning experiences have you experienced as a school counselor during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 8) Which of these informal learning experiences supported you the most? What was the best for you?

9) Is there anything you would like to add? Is there anything we still need to discuss but you'd better tell me?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW FORM (TURKISH)

GÖRÜŞME FORMU

Bu görüşme “Okul Psikolojik Danışmanlarının COVID-19 Pandemisi Döneminde Yaşadıkları Enformel Öğrenme Deneyimleri” üzerine yürütülen yüksek lisans tez çalışması kapsamında yapılmaktadır. Elde edilecek bilgiler başka herhangi bir amaçla kullanılmayacaktır. Araştırmaya katılan psikolojik danışmanlara ilişkin bilgiler gizli tutulacak ve hiçbir kişisel bilgi kamuya açıklanmayacaktır. Görüşmenin yaklaşık otuz (30) dakika sürmesi planlanmaktadır.

- 1) Okul psikolojik danışmanlığı deneyiminiz kaç yıldır?
- 2) Son çalıştığınız okuldaki okul psikolojik danışmanlığı deneyiminiz kaç yıldır?
- 3) PDR alanındaki eğitim durumunuz nedir?
- 4) COVID-19 Pandemi döneminde mesleki olarak herhangi bir zorlukla karşılaştınız mı? Karşılaştıysanız ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştınız örnek verir misiniz?
- 5) Bu zorluklarla nasıl başa çıktınız? Eğer varsa bu zorluklarla başa çıkarken ne gibi stratejiler kullandınız?
- 6) COVID-19 Pandemi döneminde mesleki olarak herhangi bir fırsatla karşılaştınız mı? Karşılaştıysanız bu fırsatları okul danışmanlığı süreçleri için nasıl kullandınız?
- 7) Okul psikolojik danışmanı olarak COVID-19 Pandemisi döneminde ne tür öğrenme uygulamaları deneyimlediniz? Bu süreçte kendi kendinize ne tür öğrenme deneyimlerinden geçtiniz? Bu öğrenme deneyimlerini açıklayabilir misiniz?
- 8) Bu öğrenme deneyimlerinden hangisi/hangileri en etkili oldu, nedenleriyle açıklayabilir misiniz?

9) Eklemek istediđiniz başka bir husus/görüş var mı? Hakkında konuşmadığımız ama belirtmek istediđiniz herhangi bir şey var mı?

APPENDIX F

ORIGINAL TURKISH QUOTES/NARRATIVES IN TURKISH

1. Çalışma hayatı olarak baktığımızda önce kendimle ilgili birkaç zorlukla boşa çıktım. Şimdi şöyle bir durum oldu hiç bilmediğimiz bu durum ülkecek aynı problemi yaşadık ııı, biliyoruz ki ama bu sürece de adapte olmamız gerekti. İlk baştaki zamanlarda evde çalışmak, evde kalmak, sosyalleşmemek bunlar hepimizi yalnızlaştırdı. Pandeminin ilk zamanlarında ben de evde kaldığım süreçte ciddi bir anksiyete olarak bana geri dönüş sağladı işte durumu yönetmek planlamak... Biraz zorluklar yaşadım o süreçte. Başında işte daha uyku problemleri çok çekiyordum. Bu sosyalleşememe alanı sadece evde kalma alanı beni çok rahatsız ediyordu. İşte sevdiklerimizden uzakta olmak, sağlık problemleri falan... (Özge)
2. Başlangıç döneminde hem çocuklar hem de bizlerin geleceğe yönelik kaygılarımız vardı. Hani o kaygılar bizi aslında çok da yordu. Kaygılar sonrasında ortaya çıkan durum aslında biraz da gelecekle ilgili olan kaygıların yanında biraz da geçmişe ve geçmiş dönemde kaybettiklerimiz yapamadıklarımızla ilgili üzüntülerimiz oldu. O duyguların dışavurumu ile ilgili birçok problemler yaşandı. Hatta bazı noktalarda da duygulara isim koyamadığımız noktalar maalesef oluşmaya başladı. Yetişkin insanlar olarak işte bizler öfke durumları ortaya çıktı. (Kerem)
3. Şey böyle içimi acıtan kısım COVID-19la ilgili. Imm yani nasıl söyleyeyim? Bu bizim yalnızlığımız hani branş olarak bizim yalnızlığımız ki biz zümreyiz aslında tek başıma da çalışmıyorum ama sonuçta görüşemiyoruz yani fiziksel olarak görüşemiyoruz. Ya yalnızlığım daha böyle suratıma suratıma çarpmış oldu, onu kabullenmiş oldum kendi adıma. Yani yalnız çalışacaksın. Ne kadar kalabalık bir okulda olursan ol, yalnız olacaksın öğrenmiş oldum. (Öykü)
4. Belirsizlik ortamı vardı. Çok şey söyleniyordu, gözümüzde baya büyümüştük o mevcut durumu. Kaygılarımız vardı onunla ilgili. O yüzden ilk yıl diğer kurumları bilmem ama biz gerçekten baya uzak kaldık okul ortamından. (Demir)
5. Kişisel olarak bir kere benim ailemde çok fazla sağlık çalışanı vardı. İlk başta da basının birazcık süreci ııı, çok abartarak vermesi nedeniyle işte ölümlerin artması vs bunlar bir kere çok korkuttu hepimizi. ııı, özellikle sanırım ailesinde sağlık çalışanı olanlar bu süreçten daha olumsuz etkilendi. Ki ilk COVID-19 vakasını yaşayanlardan bir tanesi de benim erkek kardeşimdi, o da doktor. O yüzden mesela benim için çok olumsuz bir deneyimdi. İşte sonuç ne olacak gibi, o süreçte ilaç kullanılsın mı kullanılmasın mı vs gibi süreçler çok gözümü korkuttu diyebilirim. (Şeyma)
6. İnsanın rutinlerinden uzak kalması çok zorlayıcıymış. Ben onu farkettim, o dönemde. Her gün kalkıp, makyaj yapıp giyinip işe gitmemek o süreçte çok zorlamıştı beni. (Aysa)

7. En büyük sorunumuz, çok önemli bir eğitim sorunu olan öğrencilerle göz teması kuramamızdır. Bu endişe birçok meslektaşım tarafından da dile getirildi. (Kerem)
8. Yüz ifadeleri, jestler ve ses tonu gibi iletişim öğeleri kullanmak mümkün olmadığından, bire bir görüşmelere uzaktan katılmak zordu. İıı, şimdi bu öğeler, iletişim için çok önemlidir; konuşma onlarsız anlaşılmaz hale geliyor. Bu öğeler olunca uzaktan iletişim kurmak daha kolay oldu, verimlilik seviyelerimiz yaklaşık %20 - %30'a düştü. (Murat)
9. Çocuklarla etkileşimimiz aniden kesildi. Telefon görüşmeleri yaptığımız zamanlarda öğretmenler öğrencileri bize yönlendirdi. (Gülin)
10. Profesyonel olarak yani ııı iş hayatında, iletişim en büyük zorluktu. Bire bir yakın temas bizim mesleğimiz için çok önemli. Ben ortaokulda çalışıyorum ve ortaokulun 5. ve 6. sınıflarına bakıyorum. O yaştaki çocuklarla iletişim halinde olmak bizim için çok önemli. Pandeminin büyük şok, büyük dalga anında, yani çocuklarla epey dağıldık. Hâlâ hangi kanalla ulaşacağımıza karar veriyorduk, o yüzden ben zorlandım. Sonra uzaktan eğitim sırasında evet çocuklar eğitime başlayınca acaba bu bir kanal mı acaba çocukların çok yoğun bir şekilde bilgisayara maruz kaldıklarını fark ettim. EBA'da hep derslerdeler, uzaktan eğitimde yine bilgisayar başında bulamadım. Çocuklara benim yaptığım çalışmalar pek çekici gelmedi. Çocuklara ulaşmakla iş bitmiyor... Biz okul psikolojik danışmanları olarak velilerle de iletişim halinde olmalıyız. Daha önce de söylediğim gibi yaş dönemleri ile ilgili olarak ebeveynlerle çalışıyoruz. Velilere hangi kanaldan ulaşacağım konusunda çok zorlandım. Evet, hedef kitleye ulaşmak konusunda en ciddi sorunu yaşadım. (Öykü)
11. Öğrencilere COVID-19 sırasında erişebilirdik, ancak kaynaştırma öğrencilerinin fark edilmesi gerekirdi. Yani o çocuklara ulaşmak çok daha zordu. Ailelerine ulaşamadık. Evet, tüm öğrenciler çok acı çekti, ancak eğitimleri kaynaştırma öğrencilerine göre daha az kesintiye uğradı. Özel eğitim öğrencileri, özellikle kaynaştırma öğrencilerimiz en çok zararı gördü. Görünmezlerdi... Beni COVID-19'da çok yaralayan kısımlardan biri bu. (Öykü)
12. Branşımız açısından birçok zorlukla karşılaştık. Çocuklara ilk etapta nasıl ulaşıyoruz diye çok düşündük? Biliyorsunuz bizim işimiz yüz yüze daha aktif daha etkili bir süreçti. Uzaktan eğitim ise kendimizi alıştırmamız gereken bir şeydi. Bizim için farklı bir deneyim oldu ve o süreçte çok zorlandık. İlk başta çocuklara ve ailelerine nasıl ulaşacağımızı bilmiyorduk. O süreçte veli ve öğrencilerden uzak kaldık. Başlangıçta çocuklar daha çok iş başında derslerin nasıl olacağına odaklandılar, dersleri dinlediler. Başlarda bu süreçlerden uzaktaydık ama sonra zorluklarla barıştık. (Esra)
13. Okul ortamında çocuklara ulaşmak dijital alternatiflere göre daha zahmetsizdi. Uzaktan eğitimde bu konuda çok sıkıntı çektik çünkü öğreniyile görüşmek istediğiniz her an görüşemiyorsunuz. Telefonla aradığımızda, onlarla iletişim kurmak için yardıma ihtiyacınız olabilir. (Demir)
14. Dünyanın geri kalanı gibi biz de pandeminin başlarında evlerimizle sınırlıydık ve işimiz iletişim ve insanları anlamak etrafında döndüğü için, eve

kapanmak önemli bir zorluk teşkil etti. Bu dönemde online toplantıların henüz günlük hayatımızın bir parçası olmaması, birlikte çalıştığım gruptaki özellikle 5. ve 6. sınıflardaki çocuklarla iletişim kurmamı zorlaştırıyordu. İlkokul grubu genel olarak daha da önemli zorluklarla karşılaştı. Başlangıçta, iletişim sorunlarıyla ilgili yardıma ihtiyacımız vardı. (Şeyma)

15. COVID-19 pandemisi başladığında (aynı okulda öğretmen olarak görev yapan) meslektaşlarıma EBA (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı) üzerinden canlı ders yapma konusunda seminerler verildi. Ancak bir okul psikolojik danışmanı olarak ders vermem gerekmediği için ben katılmadım. Zaman zaman öğrenciler benimle konuşmak istediler ama ben sürekli olarak danışmanlık hizmeti vermedim. Sonuç olarak, kapanma süresi boyunca öğrencilerle bağlantı kurmak için yardıma ihtiyacım vardı. Daha sonra döndüğümde, birçok öğrencinin kimseyle paylaşmadığı sorunları olduğunu ve benimle iletişime geçmek için çevrimiçi iletişim araçlarına erişmeleri gerektiğini fark ettim. Bu, onlarla bağlantı kurmamı zorlaştırdı ve ihtiyaçlarını destekleyen zorluklarla karşılaştım. (Aysa)

16. Onlarla ilgili resmi eğitim almamız gerektiğinden, Zoom ve diğer çevrimiçi platformları nasıl kullanacağımı kendim öğrenmek zorunda kaldım. Deneme yanılma yoluyla, kullanımlarında daha yetkin hale geldim. İıı, ama eski okul psikolojik danışmanı arkadaşlarımda bu uygulamalara uyum sağlamak için yardıma ihtiyaçları olduğunu fark ettim. Daha genç olduğumuz için teknoloji konusunda daha bilgiliyiz ve yeni teknolojileri bağımsız olarak daha kolay öğreniyoruz. Maalesef branş öğretmeni arkadaşlarımız bizden farklı süreçten geçtiler. Derslere katılan öğretmen arkadaşlarıma böyle bir eğitim sağlanmış olabilir diye düşünüyorum ama emin değilim. (Aysa)

17. Bağlantı sorunları, pandeminin ve uzaktan eğitimin ilk aşamasında zaten zirvedeydi. Çevrimiçi seminerler vermek için bağlandığımda kendi kendime konuşuyormuş gibi hissediyordum çoğu zaman... Sık sık kopukluklar oluyordu ve sorularımıza yanıt almak için yardıma ihtiyacımız vardı, bu da öğrencilerle göz teması kurmayı zorlaştırıyordu. Ekranın diğer ucunda öğrencilerin ne yaptığını merak ediyordum hep. Teknik sorunlar öncelikle çevrimiçi ortamla ilgiliydi. (Nurgül)

18. Başlangıçta, Zoom platformuna aşına değildim ve o sırada bilgi hırsızlığıyla ilgili endişeler de dahil olmak üzere dolaşan çok sayıda söylenti vardı. Ve bu tür platformların güvenilirliği konusunda çekincelerim olduğunu söyleyebilirim açıkçası. Ama, ıııı, derinlemesine düşündüğümde, platformun potansiyel faydalarını fark ettim ve başlangıçtaki kaygımı yavaş yavaş yendim... Sonunda, Zoom'un tüm ortamlarda her yerde ve her ortamda kullanımı beni Zoom gibi platformları işim için benimsemeye zorladı, daha kolay kullanmamı sağladı. (Esra)

19. İıı, şöyle, birçok öğrencinin evde telefon, bilgisayar, kulaklık veya hoparlör gibi temel teknolojilere erişme konusunda yardıma ihtiyacı vardı. Devlet bazı ailelere tablet veya benzeri cihazlar sağlasa da bu kaynaklara yüksek talep olması erişimi kısıtladı. Bazı öğrencilerin evinde internet olmasına rağmen, birçoğu evde gerekli teknolojiyi veya internet erişimini elde etmelerini engelleyen maddi kısıtlamalarla karşı karşıya kaldı. (Nurgül)

20. Pandemi nedeniyle bir anda uzaktan eğitimin devreye girmesiyle hepimiz bir uyum sorunu yaşadık. Bizim işimiz ağırlıklı olarak yüz yüze iletişime ve karşılıklı konuşmaya dayanan bir meslek olduğu için bu bizim için çok zor oldu. Uzaktan eğitimi tanıtırken nasıl olacağı konusunda çocuklarla aynı duyguları paylaştım. Ama diğer öğretmenlerden daha fazla zorluk yaşadım çünkü işimiz daha az kesin, beklenmedik ve ani durumlarla ilgilenmeyi gerektiriyor. Pandemi sırasında çocukların stresi ve kaygısı, görüşmeleri uzaktan yürütmeyi daha da zorlaştırdı. Başlangıçta uygun bir platform bulmak zordu, ancak sonunda online görüşmeler için Zoom veya WhatsApp kullanmaya karar verdik. Görüşmelerimizin süresi, zamanı ve aralığı önemli ölçüde değişmek zorunda kaldı ve bu da ekstra zorluklara sebep oldu. (Özge)

21. Pandeminin başında daha çok derslere ve öğretim süreçlerine odaklandılar. Öğrencilerin öğretimi daha önemliydi çünkü bu anne babalar ve idare için yeni bir durumdu. Başka bir deyişle, herkesi hazırlıksız yakalayan benzeri görülmemiş bir süreci ve kimse ne yapacağını bilemedi. (Esra)

22. Özellikle uzaktan eğitime hazır olmayan bir dünyaya uyum sağlamak ve mesleğimizi bu yeni düzende yürütmeye çalışırken birçok zorlukla karşılaştım. Çevrimiçi süreçler benim için çok yabancıydı ve bunlara uyum sağlamak pek çok engelle karşılaştık. (Buket)

23. Bu süre zarfında başlangıçta çok mücadele verdik, çocuklarla, okul yöneticileriyle ve öğretmenlerle. Örneğin, EBA'nın (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı) başlangıçta belirli bir oturumu yoktu psikolojik danışmanlar için. Sadece branş öğretmenlerine ders tanımlanmıştı. Bizimle ilgili bir düzenleme yoktu. (Kerem)

24. Mesleğimle ilgili olarak, ne EBA (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı) ne de Zoom oturumu planlanmadığı için uzaktan eğitimin ilk aşamasında teknoloji entegrasyonu konusunda yardıma ihtiyacım vardı. Bazı öğretmenler Zoom üzerinden özel ders veriyor olsa da daha yapılandırılmış bir planlamaya ihtiyaç vardı. Sonunda Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı olarak bir etkinlik kitapçığı yayınladı. Bunun üzerine müdür yardımcılarıyla görüştük ve bize de ders verildi. Bizim uyguladığımız yaklaşım buydu. Teknoloji entegrasyonu süreci oldukça zorlayıcı oldu benim için ama EBA bu süreçte psikolojik danışmanlar için daha aktif kullanılabilirdi. Açıkçası pek verimli değildi. (Gülin)

25. Bu süreçte sayısız zorluklarla karşılaştım. Bireysel toplantıları yönetebilsem de, sınıf çalışmalarını yönetmek için yardıma ihtiyacım vardı. Belirli platformları kullanmak konusunda isteksizdim ve tüm öğrencilerle aynı anda bağlantı kurmanın yollarını bulmakta zorlandım. Örneğin, pandemiden sonra 5. sınıfları nasıl yönlendireceğimi, sınıf bilincini nasıl geliştireceğimi ve 6. sınıfların okula ilgilerini nasıl kaybetmelerini engelleyeceğimi bulmakta zorlandım. Bir aidiyet duygusunu nasıl geliştireceğimden emin değildim ve araçlarımın ve tekniklerimin daha kapsamlı olması gerekiyordu. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin ilgisini canlı tutmak için yaşa uygun görsel yardımcıları kullanmayı ve deneyimi daha eğlenceli hale getirmeye çalıştım. İşimiz etkileşim gerektirir ve uzaktan öğrenme sırasında bile etkileşimli olması gerekir. Çocuklarla yüz yüze iletişim kurmak kolay olsa da, onları çevrimiçi ortamda motive etmek oldukça zordu. Okul yönetiminin bize güveni mi kalmadı, kendisi mi kararsız kaldı bilmiyorum ama bu süreçte bize herhangi bir yönlendirme yapılmadı.

İşlerimizi nasıl yapacağımız konusunda yardım istediğimizde net bir cevap da alamadık. (Öykü)

26. Uzaktan eğitim sürecinin başında dersler daha çok veli ve idare odaklıydı. Veli nasıl istiyorsa öyle oluyordu. Kimse ne yapacağını tam bilmiyordu. Hepsi için yeni bir durumdu ve kimse buna hazırlıklı değildi maalesef. (Esra)

27. Dünyanın hazırlanması gereken bir şey olduğu için alışmada zorluklar yaşandı. İşimize dahil olan çevrimiçi süreçler hepimiz için çok yeniydi ve bunlara uyum sağlamak için yardıma ihtiyacımız vardı. Ancak yardım ihtiyacımızın karşılandığı söylenemez ne yazık ki. (Buket)

28. Pandemi öncesinde rehberlik saatinin olmaması ile ilgili endişelerimizi dile getirmiştik ve maalesef aynı sorun uzaktan eğitimde de devam ediyordu. Öğrenciler rehberlik için herhangi bir süre ayrılmadan toplam 7 saat derse devam etmektedirler. 7 saatlik derslerden sonra nihayet rehberlik etkinlikleri düzenlediğimizde, okulumdan hayal kırıklığı yaratan bir katılım eksikliği vardı. Bu nedenle, zaman eksikliği benim için önemli bir zorluk oldu. (Nurgül)

29. Pandeminin olumsuz etkilerine yönelik yaygın düşünceye rağmen, bazı beklenmedik faydaların olduğunu belirtmekte fayda var. Örneğin, online eğitim ve seminerlere katılmak, yüz yüze katılımın imkansız olduğu bir zamanda kendi evimin rahatlığında katılmanın rahatlığını sağladı. Ayrıca ruh sağlığı profesyonellerinin yaptığı görüşmelere katılarak farkındalığımı artırdım. (Kerem)

30. Çevrimiçi seminerler aracılığıyla, çalıştığım İstanbul dışından çok çeşitli eğitimciler, uzmanlar ve profesyonellerle bağlantı kurduk. Ulaşım sorunları da dahil olmak üzere yüz yüze etkinliklere katılmanın getirdiği lojistik zorluklar göz önüne alındığında, bu kolay erişim değerliydi. Ama online platformlar aracılığıyla, istediğimiz tüm seminer ve etkinliklere, lokasyon fark etmeksizin katılabiliyorduk. Çevrimiçi eğitimin esnekliği, zaman ve mekan engellerini aşmamızı sağladı. (Esra)

31. Derslere evden veya kişisel bir alanda katılma seçeneği, geri bildirimlerinde de belirtildiği gibi, öğrenciler tarafından memnuniyetle karşılanan bir özgürlük olarak algılandı. Bu yaklaşım, çocuklarla bağlantı kurmamızı daha kolay hale getirdi ve eğitimsel sonuçları geliştirdi. (Şeyma)

32. İnternet üzerinden uzaktan eğitim ve seminerler yürütmek, özellikle katılımcıların Zoom toplantılarına veya çocuklara yönelik etkinliklere davet edildiği durumlarda uygulanabilir bir yaklaşımdı. Bu yaklaşım, kullanılmaya devam ederek, modern eğitim uygulamalarında devam eden ilgisini göstermektedir. (Aysa)

33. Pandemi, çevrimiçi bir şekilde yüksek lisans yapmama izin verdi ve bu önemli bir avantajdı. Uzaktan eğitim sayesinde programımı tamamladım ve mezun oldum ki bu fiziki olarak Ankara'ya gitmem gerekse çok zor olacaktı. (Öykü)

34. Farkındalığımızın artmasına katkıda bulunan çevrimiçi öğrenme sürecinden hepimiz geçtik. Bu deneyim, farklı alanlardaki çalışmalara katılımımızı kolaylaştırdı ve çeşitli terapi türlerine, eğitimlerine daha fazla erişmemizi sağladı. (Özge)

35. Şahsen, katılamayacağım online eğitimlere katılabileceğimi keşfettim. Bu, çeşitli mesleki gelişim faaliyetlerinde bulunmamı sağladı. En önemli öğrenme deneyimim, çoğu eğitim oturumuna çevrimiçi olarak erişebileceğimi fark etmemdi. Bu nedenle, bilgiye çevrimiçi erişim, kapsamlı öğrenmemin birincil kaynağı oldu benim için. (Ceyda)

36. Uzaktan eğitim, uzmanların çeşitli eğitimlere katılmalarını sağlayarak profesyoneller arasında farkındalığı önemli ölçüde artırdı. Mesela, normalde yüz yüze katılım gerektiren sanat terapisi alanı ilgimi çekmişti. Alanımızla ilgili tüm eğitimlerin ideal olarak yüz yüze yapılması gerektiğine inanmakla birlikte, fayda-maliyet analizi, katıldığım çevrimiçi oturumların yeterli olduğuna beni ikna etti. İnternette öğrendiğim çözüm odaklı terapi, zamanın kısıtlı olduğu okuldaki çalışmalarım da çok etkili oldu. Sanat terapisi, çözüm odaklı terapi gibi eğitimlere katılmak bu dönemde paha biçilemezdi. Örneğin, sanat terapisi almak, araştırmam boyunca incelediğim, özellikle sekizinci sınıf öğrencileri arasında sınav kaygısı ve akran zorbalığı gibi konuları ele alma yeteneğime önemli ölçüde katkıda bulundu. (Kerem)

37. Ayrıca pandemi, uzaktan eğitim yoluyla alanımızda mesleki gelişim için fırsatlar yarattı. Zoom gibi çeşitli platformlar aracılığıyla çevrimiçi eğitimin kullanılabilirliği önemli ölçüde artarak katılımcılar için daha fazla esneklik ve seçenek sağladı. Ek olarak, daha önce finansal veya yer kısıtlamaları nedeniyle erişilemeyen ücretli mesleki eğitim, çevrimiçi olarak ücretsiz hale geldi. Çocuklarla yüz yüze etkileşim sınırlı olsa da, yine de becerilerimizi ve bilgilerimizi geliştirebildik. (Murat)

38. Zamanlama çakışmaları veya yer kısıtlamaları nedeniyle katılmanın pek de mümkün olmadığı eğitimlere katılmak için güzel bir fırsat sunan çevrimiçi eğitimin olanaklarından yararlandım. Bu eğitim modu, akşam saatlerinde kendi evimin rahatlığında eğitim seanslarına rahatça katılmamı sağladı. (Gülin)

39. Online bir yüksek lisans programına dahil olmak, mesleki niteliklerimi geliştirmek için çok önemli bir fırsat sundu, özellikle önceki deneyimim, ailelerle ilişkinin genellikle gerekli olduğu ortaokul düzeyinde aile odaklı eğitime tam olarak müdahale etmek için yetersiz görüldü. Pandemi, kariyerimde çok önemli bir dönüm noktası olduğunu kanıtlayan bu dereceyi uzaktan takip etmek için bana eşsiz bir fırsat verdi. Ayrıca, pandemi, online olarak erişilebilen çok sayıda eğitim oturumuna katılmamı sağladı ve bu da mesleki becerilerimi daha da geliştirmemi sağladı. Bu eğitim oturumları genellikle tesadüfen resmi kanallar yerine kişisel bağlantılar ve resmi olmayan ağlar aracılığıyla keşfedildi. Bu eğitim fırsatları, özellikle okuldaki öğrencilerle çalışmamla ilgili alanlara odaklandıkları için mesleki uzmanlığımı ilerletmemde kıymetli olduklarını düşünüyorum. (Öykü)

40. Pandemiden önce kişisel eğitim uğraşları içindeydim. Rorschach ve Projektif Testler Derneği tarafından verilen 2,5 yıla yayılan Rorschach Testleri Uygulayıcı Eğitimi programına kayıt oldum. Başlangıçta akşamları derslere bizzat katıldım; ancak ders programı, eğitmenimin müsait olması nedeniyle değiştirilmişti ve bu da çalışma saatlerim ile program çakışmasına neden oldu. Bu durumdan dolayı programı bırakmayı düşündüm. Pandemi sırasında çevrimiçi eğitim platformlarının ortaya çıkışı, eğitimime uzaktan devam etmemi sağladı ve bu da uygun ve avantajlı

bir alternatif oldu. Bu gelişmeler ışığında online eğitime geçiş kişisel gelişimim için önemli bir fırsat. (Şeyma)

41. Pandeminin ilk aşamasından sonra uzaktan eğitim sürecinde daha ustalaştık. Öğrencilerim, meslektaşlarım ve ben çevrimiçi ortamı daha iyi tanıdık ve daha iyi kullandık. Bu, Zoom toplantıları düzenlemeyi ve çocuklarla uzaktan etkileşim kurmak için çevrimiçi platformları kullanmayı içeriyordu. Çeşitli kısıtlamalar nedeniyle, toplantıları yüz yüze yapmaktansa çevrimiçi yapmak genellikle daha uygundu. Şu anda belli durumlarda hala uzaktan eğitimden yararlanıyoruz. (Özge)

42. Pandemi sırasında grup rehberliği ve bireysel görüşmeler için birincil platform olarak Zoom'u kullandım. Anne, babayla birlikteyken çocuğun uygun olmadığı durumlarda, WhatsApp grup görüşmelerine başvurduk. Ayrıca 7. ve 8. sınıf öğrencilerinin akademik başarılarını artırmak için "akran dayanışması" uyguladım. 4-5 veya 7-8 kişilik gruplar oluşturarak Zoom veya WhatsApp videosu üzerinden iletişim kurarak karşılaştıkları sorunları tartışıp çözüme kavuşturduk. Çevrimiçi etkileşimler ideal olmasa da, pandemi sırasında çocuklara destek ve süreklilik sağladı. (Kerem)

43. Uzaktan eğitim, özellikle akşam oturumlarına misafir davet etmemizi sağlayarak Veli Akademileri Projesi'ni kolaylaştırdı. Projenin bu yönü, çevrimiçi platformun sunduğu esneklik ve erişilebilirlik nedeniyle önemli ölçüde faydalı oldu. (Murat)

44. Uzaktan eğitim döneminde online okul gezileri faydalı oldu. Her liseye fiziki geziler yapmak, her öğrenciyi bu tür gezilerde ağırlamak mümkün değil. Pandemi öncesi sadece iki liseye ziyaret düzenleyebilmişken, çevrimiçi okul gezileri sayesinde öğrenciler çok sayıda okulu sanal olarak ziyaret edebildiler. Ayrıca bu şekilde daha fazla öğrenci bu imkandan yararlanabilmiş oldu. Bu da fırsat eşitliği anlamında olumlu oldu diyebilirim. Bazı okullar, içeriklerini web sitelerine zaten yüklemişti, bu da öğrencilerin bunları uzaktan keşfetmesine olanak tanıyordu. Biz psikolojik danışmanlar öğrencilere bu yaklaşımı tanıttık ve prosedürü açıkladık. Bazı durumlarda, ziyaret edilen okullardan tanıtımda görevli psikolojik danışmanlar ve öğrenciler daha fazla bilgi sağlamak için canlı Zoom toplantıları düzenlediler. (Esra)

45. Pandemi sürecinde, bize ulaşması gereken öğrencilerin online randevu almalarını kolaylaştırmak için teknolojiyi kullandık. Özellikle, öğrencilerin veya velilerin bizden randevu talep etmelerine olanak tanıyan bir Google formu oluşturduğum ve öğrencilerin yaşadığı sorunlar hakkında geri bildirimde bulunduk. Çevrimiçi toplantılar yoluyla danışmanlık verme deneyimi, işimizi daha yönetilebilir hale getiren teknolojinin faydalarını vurguladı. (Nurgül)

46. Veli toplantılarını çevrimiçi yapmanın bize bir rahatlama duygusu sağladığını gördük. Bu yaklaşıma uyum sağladıktan sonra, tamamen çevrimiçi bir platforma geçebiliriz belki de. Bu yıl Veli Akademileri Projesi'ni de uzaktan yürüttüm. Yüz yüze toplantılar yapıldığında on beş veli zor katılırken, online oturumlara neredeyse altmış veli dahil olabildi. Bu yaklaşım, aksi takdirde iş ve zaman kısıtlamaları nedeniyle fiziksel toplantılara katılmakta güçlük çekecek olan dışarıdan uzmanları davet etmede de faydalı oldu. İnternetin anne-babalar da dahil olmak üzere herkes tarafından erişilebilir olması, okul etkinliklerine katılımlarını kolaylaştırmıştır. Başlangıçta, bu yeni duruma uyum sağlama konusunda zorluklarla karşılaştık elbette,

ancak ebeveynler programın katkılarını gördükten sonra daha istekli hale geldiler ve aktif olarak katıldılar. Velilerin müsaitlik durumuna göre planlı online etkinliklere katılmaya daha istekli olduklarını gözlemledik. (Özge)

47. Teknolojinin kolaylaştırdığı ebeveyn katılımını geleneksel yüz yüze eğitimlere göre veli toplantılarına katılanların sayısının artmasından anlayabiliyoruz. Teknoloji tabanlı platformlara geçiş benim için ebeveyn katılımı açısından avantajlı oldu diyebilirim. (Murat)

48. Şu anda Beykoz'un Paşabahçe bölgesinde, çoğu ebeveynin fiziksel olarak zorlayıcı, ağır iş yükü olan işlerde çalıştığı bir okulda çalışıyorum. Yoğun iş saatleri ve izin eksikliği nedeniyle yüz yüze toplantılara veya seminerlere katılamıyorlardı pandemi öncesinde. Çoğu fabrikada çalıştığı için anneler bile telefonlarına cevap veremedi. Bu durum önemli bir katılım sorununa yol açmış ve veliler için istenilen hedeflere ulaşılammıştı. Pandemiyle birlikte "mesai dışı" kavramı ortaya çıktı ve okul saatleri dışında toplantılar düzenleyerek eğitimlerimizi daha erişilebilir hale getirdik. Çalışmalarımıza daha fazla veli katılabildi. Bu yaklaşım, özellikle bireysel görüşmelerde, örneğin lise tercih danışmanlığı sürecinde, öğrencilerle kendi memleketlerinde görüşme yaptığımızda hala kullanılmaya devam ediyor. (Buket)

49. Veli katılımı açısından uzaktan eğitimin avantajlı olduğu ortaya çıktı. Mesela, yüz yüze seminerlere katılım düşüktü, ancak çevrimiçi yapıldığında katılan ebeveynlerin sayısı önemli ölçüde arttı. Bu olumlu sonuç, çevrimiçi eğitimin, pandeminin sonrasında bile ebeveynlerin ilgisini çekmek için faydalı bir platform olduğunun fark edilmesini sağladı. Bu nedenle, pandemi geçtikten sonra bile, ebeveyn katılımını artırmak için çevrimiçi eğitim seçeneği devam edecektir diye düşünüyorum. (Nurgül)

50. Eskiden sınıfa girmek istemeyen öğrencilere uzaktan eğitimle daha kolay ulaşabildik. Örneğin teknoloji bağımlılığı olan öğrencilerin görüntülü sohbetlere daha fazla ilgi gösterdiğini gözlemledim. Bu öğrencilerle daha etkili iletişim kurdum pandemi sürecinde. Hatta bazı öğrencilerimden, "Öğretmenim okula gelmekten daha keyifliydi" gibi olumlu geri bildirimler aldım. Ayrıca mesela bazen benim zorlandığım teknolojik konularda "Hocam biz sizin için araştırdık, yardımcı olabiliriz." gibi mesajlar aldım. Öğrencilerden gelen bu tür destekler, uzaktan eğitim sırasındaki etkileşimlerimizi daha anlamlı hale getirdi. (Şeyma)

51. Bireysel danışmanlık seanslarını yüz yüze yerine uzaktan yürütmek için teknolojiyi kullanmak biz psikolojik danışmanlar için avantaj olarak değerlendirildi. Bu süreçte online psikolojik danışma seansları yürütme becerisi kazandık. (Esra)

52. Bu süre zarfında, çevrimiçi danışmanlık da dahil olmak üzere yeni danışmanlık yöntemlerini öğrenme fırsatım oldu. 14-15 yıllık deneyime sahip bir okul psikolojik danışmanı olarak, çevrimiçi psikolojik danışma kavramına yabancıydım ve verimli olup olmadığını merak ediyordum. Ancak pandemi, giderek daha önemli hale gelen çevrimiçi danışmanlığın uygulanması da dahil olmak üzere yeni profesyonel fırsatlar getirdi. Çevrimiçi danışmanlığın ortaya çıkışı, mesleğimizin kapsamını genişletti ve profesyonel gelişim için yeni yollar açtı. (Buket)

53. "Hocam, online görüşmeler yüz yüze görüşmelerden çok daha keyifli. Keşke görüşmelerimizi hep online yapabilsek." gibi geri bildirimler aldım öğrencilerden. Kameraların açılıp kapanmasını kontrol etmenin kişisel bir özgürlük duygusu sağladığını düşünüyorum açıkçası. Psikolojik danışma seanslarımızda kameraların çoğu zaman açık olduğunu belirtmekte fayda var. (Şeyma)

54. Kişisel cihazlarımızla kolayca erişilebilen zengin bir bilgiyi parmaklarımızın ucuna getirdiğinden, bilgiye çevrimiçi erişim benim için çok önemli bir öğrenme deneyimi oldu. Bu, odaklanmış bir zihne ve net bir hedefe sahip olan meslektaşlarıma çok iyi fırsatlar sundu. İlk çevrimiçi öğrenme deneyimim, kendi kendimize bırakıldığımız zamanlardaki yalnızlık duygumla eşleşebilir. Az stres, beni her zaman motive eder ve yeni kaynaklar aramaya iter. Pandemi de böyle oldu. Stresim beni motive etti. Bu ortamda üretken olma ve ihtiyacı olanlara yardım etme baskısı, harekete geçme dürtümü hızlandırdı ve normalde beş yılda yapabileceğim hedefleri yalnızca bir yılda gerçekleştirmemi sağladı. (Ceyda)

55. Yeni yöntemleri çalışmalarına dahil edebildiğim için pandemi dönemi bana gelişim için önemli fırsatlar sundu. Videoların, sunumların, posterlerin ve broşürlerin çevrimiçi olarak daha uygun bir şekilde kullanılması nedeniyle, sınıf grupları aracılığıyla hem çocuklara hem de ebeveynlere ulaşmak için çeşitli dijital programlardan yararlandım. Bu programlar sayesinde ilgi çekici sunumlar, posterler ve videolar hazırladım ve teknolojik becerilerimi geliştirdim. Sonuç olarak, pandemi, çocukların dikkatini çeken görsel olarak çekici sunumlar ve posterler oluşturmamı sağladı. (Kerem)

56. E-okul ve okul psikolojik danışma servisi instagram hesapları sayesinde Web 2.0 araçlarını doküman oluşturmak için kullanma konusunda eğitimler alıp yeterlilik kazandım. Ayrıca, bu süre zarfında öğrencilerle iletişimi güçlendirmek için okul sosyal medya hesapları oluşturdum. Evden çalışmak bana daha fazla esneklik sağladı ve bu görevlere daha fazla zaman ayırmamı sağladı. Yüz yüze danışmanlık seanslarının zorlu doğasının aksine, çok daha az yorucuydu. Danışmanlığa yenilikçi yaklaşımlar üzerinde düşünmem için bana bolca fırsat verdiler. Mevcut koşulların bu konuda benim için avantajlı olduğunu söyleyebilirim. (Murat)

57. Veri toplama için dijital formları, özellikle Google Formları kullanmayı öğrendik. Bu önemli gelişme, kağıt tırafına gerek kalmadan daha fazla kişiye ulaşmamızı sağladı. Örneğin, dijital Okul Risk Faktörleri Analiz Formları ve Rehberlik İhtiyaç Analizi Formları kullandık. Yüz yüze eğitimde 50-100 kişiden veri toplamak zorken geçen sene 600 öğrenciden 300-400'üne rahatlıkla ulaştık. Bu yöntem, öncelikle yapılan öğrenciler veya 8. sınıftakiler gibi yüz yüze görüşmelerde müsait olmayan kişileri hedeflememizi sağladı. Bu yöntemin avantajı kağıt israfını ortadan kaldırmasıdır. Bu strateji başarılı oldu ve veri toplama için dijital formları kullanmaya devam etmeyi planlıyoruz. (Murat)

58. Sosyal medyanın eğitim materyallerine erişimi kolaylaştırma potansiyelini fark ettim. Uzaktan eğitime geçiş, eğitim gündemlerinden haberdar olmak için sosyal medya kullanımının artmasına neden oldu. İlgili sosyal medya hesaplarını takip ederek alan profesyonellerinin duyurularına ve canlı yayınlarına ulaşabildim. Ayrıca, pandeminin sonlarına doğru yüksek lisans yapmaya başladım ve çevrimiçi olması benim için çok faydalı oldu. Ayda sadece bir kez yüz yüze derslere katıldım, bu da

onu çok daha yönetilebilir hale getirdi. Genellikle yüz yüze katılım ve daha fazla çaba gerektiren hizmet içi eğitim artık çevrimiçiydi ve önemli bilgiler edinmeme olanak sağladı. Sonuç olarak, çevrimiçi eğitimin kolaylaştırdığı artan erişilebilirlik sayesinde katıldığım eğitim sayısı önemli ölçüde arttı. (Gülin)

59. Birçok eğitimi başta Instagram olmak üzere sosyal medya platformlarından öğrendim. Instagram'da takip ettiğim sayfalarda ve hatta YouTube'da çeşitli ilgi alanlarıma giren canlı yayınlarda eğitimler duyuruldu. Merakımı uyandıran konuları aktif olarak araştırarak ve keşfederek öğrenmeyi severim. Kişisel ilgi alanlarım, katıldığım eğitim oturumlarını tamamen yönlendirdi. (Öykü)

60. YouTube'da çeşitli videoların bulunması nedeniyle bilgiye erişimin çok basitleştiğini düşünüyorum. Sosyal medya platformlarında artan rehberlik ve psikolojik danışma videolarıyla birlikte, okul psikolojik danışmanları için öğrenme daha rahat ve daha az kaygı uyandırıcı hale geldi. YouTube'da rehberlik ve psikolojik danışma ile ilgili konuları araştırdığımda, her an erişilebilen birçok videonun bulunduğunu gözlemledim. Bu erişilebilirlik bir rahatlık duygusu sağlayabilir ve öğrenciler için kaygı düzeylerini azaltabilir. Kaygımı yenmeme ve yeni becerileri mesleğime başarılı bir şekilde entegre etmeme yardımcı olduğu için bu deneyimi verimli buldum. (Buket)

61. Android telefonumda Canva gibi yeni uygulamalarla karşılaştım. Çevrimiçi eğitimleri takip ederek posterler, videolar ve ses kayıtları oluşturmayı öğrendim. Bu beceriler uzaktan eğitimden önceki hayatımdan farklıydı. Öğrenmemin arkasındaki temel güç, herhangi bir dış zorunluluktan ziyade, kişisel merakımdı. Daha fazla deneyim kazandıkça, süreci başlangıçta düşündüğümünden daha az karmaşık buldum ve Youtube gibi platformlarda birçok kaynağın bulunduğunu fark ettim. Gerekli becerileri kendi çabam ile elde ettim. (Demir)

62. Öğretmen Akademileri ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından düzenlenen bir araştırma çalışmasına katıldım. Pandemiden önce, çocukların kaliteli eğitim hakkını güvence altına almak için öğretmenler ve psikolojik danışmanlar için gelişimi destekleyen Öğretmen Akademileri Vakfı programına kaydoldum. Programın sekiz hafta süren ilk grup çalışmasına Beşiktaş'ta haftada iki gün 15 psikolojik danışman bizzat katılmıştır. Bu akademiye Beykoz'daki bir hocam sayesinde haberdar oldum. Eğitimi üniversiteden bir profesör verdi ve ücretsizdi. Akademinin zaman zaman Zoom gibi platformları kullanarak online oturumlar gerçekleştirmesi benim için aydınlatıcı bir deneyim oldu. Beni bu çalışmayla tanıştıran öğretmen arkadaşım sayesinde böylesine güzel bir programdan faydalanma fırsatım oldu. (Özge)

63. Zorluklarıma çözüm bulmak için motivasyon olarak eğitim fırsatlarını araştırmayı seçtim. Başlangıçta bir eğitim programı önerisi aldım ve diğer seçenekleri belirlemek için araştırmaya devam ettim. Türk Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik Derneği de önemli bilgi ve beceriler kazandığım çeşitli eğitim programlarına erişimimi kolaylaştırdı. (Ceyda)

64. Pandemide biraz boş zaman buldum ve onu verimli bir şekilde nasıl değerlendireceğimi düşündüm. Bu süreçte İstanbul Öğretmen Akademileri'nin Web 2.0 araçlarını kullanma becerilerimi geliştirmek için sunduğu online eğitim programına katılmaya karar verdim. Bu benim için yeni bir alandı ve başlangıçta çevrimiçi olarak sunulan çeşitli grafik tasarım araçlarına aşina değildim. Eğitim

oturumları, diğer şeylerin yanı sıra Canva ve sanal sınıfları içeren bu araçlarda yeterlilik kazanmama yardımcı oldu. (Murat)

65. İstanbul Öğretmen Akademileri tarafından düzenlenen birçok eğitim oturumuna katıldım. Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğünün düzenlemiş olduğu zorunlu olmayan hizmetiçi eğitimlere de sık sık katıldım. (Gülin)

66. Pandemi sürecinde teknoloji ile ilgili konularda yetersizliklerimin farkına vardım ve becerilerimi geliştirmem gerektiğini fark ettim. Süreci online olarak devam ettirdiğimi fark ederek, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Sanat ve Mesleki Eğitim Kursları (İSMEK) ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Bilişim Sistemleri (MEBBİS) tarafından sağlananlar da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli eğitim olanaklarıyla bilgimi genişletmeye çalıştım. Bu kurslar, Web 2.0 araçları, çevrimiçi oyun geliştirme ve sunumlar ve seminerler için etkileşimli içerik oluşturma gibi çeşitli konuları kapsıyordu. Sonuç olarak, sunumlar ve seminerler için PowerPoint gibi geleneksel araçlar yerine çevrimiçi platformları kullanarak değerli deneyimler kazandım. Bu eğitim pandemi sürecinde mesleki gelişimime önemli katkı sağladı ve kendimi bu alanda geliştirmeye devam ediyorum. Çevrimiçi içerik ve etkinliklerin karşı tarafla aktif katılımı ve etkileşimi geliştirebileceğine inanıyorum. Öğrenme ihtiyaçlarımı karşılamak için gerekli eğitimi bulmak için bağımsız olarak araştırma yaptım. (Nurgül)

67. Bu benim için önemli bir meydan okumaydı ve bilgi arayarak ve bilgi edinerek boşluğu kapatmaya çalıştım. Bu süre zarfında kişisel ve profesyonel talepleri dengelemek zordu. Bu nedenle, bu zorluğun üstesinden gelmek için sürekli olarak okumaya, eğitim videoları izlemeye ve çevrimiçi eğitimlere katılmaya başvurdum. Durumu yönetme yaklaşımım buydu. (Öykü)

68. Günlük haberleri ve güvenilir kaynakları takip etmek güvenilir kaynaklardan bilgi edinmemi sağladı. Bu yaklaşımın faydaları, İngilizce olarak yabancı web sitelerinden ve sosyal medya kanallarından okudukça ortaya çıktı. Yabancı dil öğrenmenin avantajlarını fark ettim ve bilgimi arttırmak ve kesin ayrıntılar sağlamak için gündemi takip ederek doğru ve kapsamlı bilgiler elde ettim. (Demir)

69. Başlangıçta, kaygı düzeyim çok yüksekti. Zorluklarla başa çıkarken endişelerimi hafifletmek için güvenilir bilgi aramak için ciddi çaba gösterdim diyebilirim. Güvenilir bilgi edinme kaygı düzeyimi arttırmamak için önemliydi. (Şeyma)

70. Pandemi sürecinde kişisel ve profesyonel anlamda kendimi geliştirmek için okuma yaptım bol bol. Bibliyoterapide buldum çözümü. Psikolojik danışma alanımızla ilgili ve pandemi hakkında okuyarak, geçmiş travma bilgilerimden kalan bilgilerimi mevcut duruma aktarabildim. Bu yöntem benim var olan bilgilerimi tazelememe yardımcı olduğu gibi yeni bilgiler öğrenmemi de sağladı. (Buket)

71. Pandemi sürecinde evde geçirilen sürenin uzaması nedeniyle çeşitli gruplardan ve arkadaşlardan bir şeyler öğrenme fırsatı doğdu. Okul psikolojik danışmanları arasındaki işbirliğinin diğer alanlara göre oldukça yüksek olduğunu ve bu sayede akranlar arasında büyük bir bilgi birikiminin paylaşıldığını fark ettim. Beyin fırtınası oturumları, özellikle sorunlara yeni yaklaşımlar ve çözümler üretilmesinde etkili olmuştur. Daha sonra bu yaklaşımları sunumlar ve videolar

hazırlarken ve çocuklara ulařırken uyguladım. Bu nedenle, çeřitli sunum hazırlama tekniklerinin öneminin onların becerilerini geliřtirmek ve öđrencilere ulařmak olduđunu düşünüyorum. (Kerem)

72. Ailemden teknolojik konularda destek aldım. Örneđin, Zoom ve programları indirme ve entegre etme hakkında bilgi edinmem gerekiyordu. Pandemi sırasında doğum yaptıđım için teknolojik öğrenmede meslektaşlarıma göre geri kaldım. Neyse ki aile desteđi açısından bazı avantajlarım oldu. Erkek kardeřim ve kuzenlerim teknik alanlarda mühendisler, bu da iliřkilerim aracılıđıyla gerekli bilgilere ulařmamı sađlıyor. (Buket)

73. Bir okul psikolojik danıřmanı olarak karřılařtıđım zorluklar diđer okullarda yaygın olduđu için kendimi diđer meslektaşlarımdan ayrı hissetmiyordum. Benzer problemleri yaşıyorduk. Meslektaşlarımla iletiřim kurduđumda benzer deneyimlerini paylařtılar. Pandeminin hem olumlu hem de olumsuz yanları olduđunu keřfettik, bu da kaygımı hafifletti. Birbirimizle sık sık bilgi alıřveriřinde bulunduk ve birbirimizin deneyimlerinden öğrendik. (Nurgül)

74. Teknolojiyi kullanma eđilimim var; ancak teknik bilgim daha kapsamlı olabilirdi. Teknoloji pandemiden önce hayatımda çok önemli bir rol oynamadı. Yine de teknoloji konusunda aldıđım gönüllü ve kendi çabamıřa aldıđım eđitimler hayatımı çok kolaylařtırdıđı için faydalı oldu. Teknoloji kullanımı, aldıđım eđitim ve öğretimin yanı sıra iřimde bana yardımcı oldu ve bireylerle etkili iletiřim kurmamı sađladı. Örneđin, çevrimiçi toplantıların ve bireysel görüřmelerin rahatlıđı, teknoloji kullanımının faydalarıdır. Zorunlu bir teknoloji eđitimi almamıř olmama rađmen önemini bu pandemi sürecinde keřfettim. Günümüz dünyasında dünya vatandařı olmak, sonunda fark ettiđim yazılım öğrenmeyi gerektiriyor. Örnek olarak, uluslararası bir Őey düşünseydim, yazılıma ihtiyaç duyardım ve bu nedenle çevrimiçi yollarla Python hakkında bazı temel eđitimler aldım. Yurtdıřında yařayan bir arkadařım bu kursu bana tavsiye etti ve bunun harika bir deneyim olduđunu gördüm. (Nurgül)

75. Zor dönemde Sađlık Bakanlıđı'nın, Milli Eđitim Bakanlıđı'nın, üniversitelerin internet sitelerinin belirlediđi gündemi takip etmeye bařladım. Ayrıca Instagram'da İstanbul Öğretmen Akademileri ile tanıştım ve online eđitimlerine katıldım. Bařa çıkmanın yollarını ararken, öğretmenler için dijital bir platform olan eTwinning'i keřfettim. eTwinning projesine katıldım ve dijital okuryazarlıđımı geliřtiren ve beni daha bilinçli bir dijital vatandař yapan dijital faaliyetlere katıldım. (Öykü)

76. Güvenilir, kolay ulařılabilen kaynaklardan gündeme bađlı kalarak bilgi edindim. İngilizce yazılmıř yabancı web sitelerine ve kanallara eriřim, sosyal medyada yabancı kaynaklardan bilgi okumamı ve edinmemi sađladı. Sonuç olarak, bir yabancı dilde yeterliliđin avantajlarını fark ettim. Okumamı ve gündemi takip etmemi kolaylařtırdı, dođru bilgiyi edinip yaymamı sađladı. (Demir)

77. Öncelikle, bu zorluklarla bařa çıkmayla ilgili sıkıntıyı hafifletmek için beni güvenilir bilgiler aramaya sevk eden yüksek düzeyde kaygı yařadım. Güvenilir bilgiye ulařmak, güvenilir bilgi arayıřımda kritik bir rehber olan dođru bilgiyi elde etmede çok önemliydi. Tedbir olarak kaygımı tetikleyebilecek bilgilere ulařmaktan kaçındım. (Őeyma)

78. Salgının başlangıcında, başlangıçta zorluklarla başa çıkmak için mücadele ettim. Ardından, çocuklarla farkındalık egzersizlerini içeren bir strateji uyguladım. Daha önce farkındalık üzerine bir grup çalışmasına katılmış olarak, bu deneyimi evde kalma ve belirsiz bir gelecek planlama konusundaki endişelerimi gidermek için kullandım. Başlangıçta günlük 20 dakikalık vücut taraması ve nefes egzersizlerinden oluşan 8 haftalık bir deneme süreci yürüttüm. Daha sonra hem pandemi hem de yaklaşan sınavlar nedeniyle stres yaşayan çocuklarla, özellikle 8. sınıf öğrencileriyle küçük gruplar oluşturmaya çalıştım. Zoom üzerinden iki günde bir 15 ila 20 dakika süren çeşitli mindfulness aktiviteleri gerçekleştirdik. Bu egzersizlerin etkisi son derece olumluydu, stresle başa çıkma mekanizmaları sağladı ve çocuklarda farkındalığı artırmaya yardımcı oldu. Farkındalık ve nefes egzersizleri ile devam ederek uyku problemimi hallettim. Sekiz haftanın tamamını çocuklarla birlikte yürütemesek de hem onlara hem de bana pandeminin getirdiği zorluklarla baş etmede yardımcı oldu. (Özge)

79. Başa çıkma stratejisi olarak, COVID-19 Pandemisi sırasında meditasyona başvurdum. Özellikle "güvenli yer" alıştırması en sık kullanılan yöntemdi, gevşemeye neden olan bir yer üzerinde düşünmeyi ve içsel düşünce süreçlerime odaklanmayı içeriyordu. Bu teknik, uzaktan eğitim ve pandemi ile ilgili stres sırasında bana yardımcı oldu. (Şeyma)

80. Pandeminin başlangıcında okul rehber öğretmenleri olarak zorlu koşullarla karşılaştık ve desteğe ihtiyaç duyduk. Dayanışma bizim için çok önemliydi. Akran dayanışmasının gücünü, okul rehber öğretmenlerinin zorluklar karşısında birbirlerine destek olduklarını gözlemleyerek fark ettim. Ayrıca bu zamanlarda birbirimizin davranışlarından öğrendiğimizi fark ettim. Ayrıca akran dayanışmasının etkililiğine inandım ve bunu okul müdürleri ve öğretmenlerle birlikte yaptım. Birbirimizin desteğine güvendim ve çalışmalarımızı karşılıklı yardımlaşma ile yürüttük. Benzer akademik düzeylere sahip öğrenci grupları oluşturarak bu yöntemi çocuklara da uyguladım. Her öğrencinin öğrenmesi gerekenleri belirledik ve ekip olarak çalıştık. Bu süreçte öğrencilerinden çok şey öğrendim. (Kerem)

81. Bu süre zarfında, Eğitim Bilişim Ağı'nın (EBA) kurulması, işletilmesi ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın Merkezi Eğitim Bilgi Sistemi'nin (MEBBİS) oluşturulmasında zorluklarla başa çıkmak için meslektaşlarımdan yardım aldım. Meslektaşlarım bu toplantılarda teknik olarak bana yardımcı oldular. Tamamen kendi çabalarımızla hiçbir eğitim ve gerekli bilgiyi almadık. (Buket)

82. Rehberlik hizmetlerinin sağlanması, danışmanlar, okul yönetimi ve eğitim kurumu içindeki diğer ilgili paydaşlar arasında uyumlu bir işbirliğini gerektirir. Bu konuda paydaşlarla ilişki kurduğum sınıf rehber öğretmenlerinden önemli yardımlar aldım. Bu işbirliği, görevlerimizi yerine getirmek için karşılıklı desteği ve ortak sorumluluğu gerektiriyordu. Bu noktayı açıklamak için, bir sandalye analogisi sağladık ve hedeflerimize ulaşmanın, sandalyenin her bir ayağının stabilitesinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olması gibi, her bir paydaşın kolektif çabasına bağlı olduğunu vurguladık. Bu nedenle, ilgili tüm tarafların ortak hedeflerimize ulaşmak için bir dayanışma ve işbirliği duygusu geliştirmesi zorunludur. (Demir)

83. Günlük rutininin bozulması, yönetmeyi zor bulduğum derin bir değişiklikti. Bu dönemde erken kalkmak, makyaj yapmak gibi belirli alışkanlıkları sürdürmenin

günlük işlerimi kolaylaştırdığını fark ettim. Pandemiye uyum sağlamak için, sanki dışarıdaki hayatım önemli ölçüde etkilenmemiş gibi, işyerime gidip gelir gibi hazırlanarak yeni rutinler oluşturmaya çalıştım. Ayrıca, diğer pek çok kişi gibi ben de daha fazla yemek pişirme ve kaliteli aile zamanı ile uğraştım. Hayatıma alternatif bir unsur getiren yeni bir rutin oluşturarak ruh sağlığımı korumaya çalıştım. (Öykü)

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