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An Analysis on the Attitudes of Academic Staff towards Distance Education

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ABSTRACT: *In this study, the attitudes of the academic staff working in NamıkKemal University (NKU) towards distance education were examined according to different variables. Within this scope, the distance education attitude scale developed by Ağır et al. was used. 283 out of 955 academic staff working in NKU participated in this research in 2015. The data obtained from the research were analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0 program. In the evaluation of the data; numbers, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used as the descriptive statistical methods. T-test was used in the comparison of the quantitative continuous data between two independent groups, while One-Way ANOVA was used in the comparison of the quantitative continuous data between more than two independent groups. In order to determine the differences after the ANOVA, Scheffe's test was used as the complementary post-hoc analysis. The obtained findings were evaluated at the confidence interval of 95% and at the significance level of 5%.*

It was determined in the study that the attitude level of the participants as to "the positive aspects of distance education" proved to be moderate (2,851 ± 0,716); whereas the attitude level as to "the negative aspects of distance education" proved to be weak (2,430 ± 0,757); and the attitude level as to "the advantages of distance education" proved to be high (3,618 ± 0,713).While age and gender were seen to have not affected the attitudes towards distance education, the academic title was seen to have affected these attitudes. The obtained statistical data and findings contributed to the studies regarding the foundation and constitution of Distance Education Center (DEC) as well as raising awareness for DEC.

I. Introduction

Having appeared in 1700s, distance education is the type of education which has continued until today by changing and developing on the basis of technological development. Distance education is the type of education in which information and communication technologies are used pre-eminently, which provides materials as well as learning means specific to the person, and in which the sources provided can be accessed independent of time and placeis becoming interesting and popular all around the world.

In several countries, distance education is preferred, particularly to provide convenience or flexibility to learners and to make it easy to access into educational services. In Turkey, the educational requirements of individuals are tried to be met through distant training (open learning) and distance education. Many universities/institutes throughout the world launch associate degree programs as well as undergraduate or post-graduate programs by setting up the infrastructures of distance education. There are distance education programs in most of the universities in Turkey. Besides, the Common Required Courses (CRC), such as Turkish Language, Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution and Foreign Languages are provided through distance education. Within this context, it is of great importance to determine the attitudes of the instructors, the main elements of the education to be provided, towards distance education as well as their occupational self-efficacies and their contribution to distance education. Both increasing the quality of the education provided and receiving the views of students and instructors as well as evaluating their attitudes so as to eliminate the imperfections in the ongoing educational programs have been the subjects of several studies. In the literature, there are a number of studies that examine the views and attitudes of students and instructors as regards distance education.

Süeret al. (2005) investigated the attitudes towards distance education and readiness levels of those in all the educational units of Gazi University in terms of human power resources and tried to determine what type of distance education courses were needed and in what field they were required, as well. Ağıret al.(2008) investigated the attitudes of primary school teachers working in private schools and state schools towards distance education, and it was seen that the attitude levels of teachers towards distance education proved to be positive and close to a moderate value. In another study (Inman et al., 1999), the attitudes of students and teachers towards distance education were examined, and as a result, the attitudes of the teachers were observed to have been contradictory. The teachers stated that they would like to provide distance education courses once again but added that the quality of these courses was lower than that of classical education or was sometimes equal to it. The students, however, said that they were quite satisfied with this type of education. In another

study conducted for the purpose of examining the motivations and satisfactions of the academic staff as regards distance education, it was seen that the motivations and satisfactions of the instructors proved to be at higher levels; yet, this situation depended on providing a good support for this type of education (Lee, 2001).

Several factors affect the educators' attitudes towards distance education. In a research carried out, it was ascertained that the perceptions regarding the challenges that showed up during the course of this practice and the factors in relation to the conformability of distance education had affected the participants' attitudes towards distance education. Separately, the ages and the roles of the participants also became prominent as the attitude-affecting factors (Ross and Klug, 1999). In a research carried out by Ayyıldızet al. (2006), the participants stated that the distance education on accountancy had caused excitement in them. Moreover, they pointed out the fact that they enjoyed taking part in the activities regarding the distance education on accountancy as well as reading the research articles and publications on this subject. Although they emphasized that it was necessary to assign more resources on this subject, which had to be supported by all, they stated that this method was not as effective as the conventional one and that they did not find it reputable to receive their accountancy diplomas through this type of education. In another study where the attitudes of the instructors towards e-learning were examined, it was concluded that the attitudes of the instructors towards e-learning proved to be positive. Separately, it was determined that self-efficacy, self-learning, instructional leadership and the use of multimedia were the attitude-affecting factors (Liaw et al., 2007).

Apart from the fact that making innovations is of importance, it is also important that those that will utilize the innovation be ready for that innovation. Itwas reported in the research conducted by Tezer andBicen (2015) for the purpose of assessing the readiness of university instructors for e-educational systems, the instructors to utilize the e-educational systems were determined to be ready. In another study, on the other hand, a questionnaire was applied to determine the viewpoints of the instructors on distant education and to see how much required background knowledge they had, it was found that the instructors had found the distance education necessary and had stated that they would like to be in charge in distance education (İnan, 2013). Kılıç and Seyis (2014) examined the distance education the instructors received through this system as well as their status of adopting the education they received. According to the research findings, it was seen that the most important reason why the instructors had preferred distance education was the fact that distance education was independent of time and place, that this type of education provided equality of opportunity under present conditions, and that it had quite a significant structure as the promoter of formal education.

In another study, however, the instructors involved stated that they were aware of the advantages provided through the distance educational system; yet, they did not believe in the success of this system and that they did not wish to arrange a course content on it (Yıldırım, 2010).The instructors in charge of distance education reported that web-based technologies had been helpful to them in achieving their educational targets (Chick et al., 2002). In a study conducted by Lindner (2002), it was found that the majority of teachers were not opposed to distance education; furthermore, the teachers providing service through distance education stated that this system had positively affected their perceptions towards the distance educational factors. In another study, it was determined that the individuals providing service through distance education (72%) had exhibited more positive attitudes than those who did not (51%) (Carr, 2000).

The objective of this study is to research into the attitudes of the academic staff working in NKU towards distance education. In this context, answers to the following questions have been sought;

- How are the attitudes of the academic staff towards distance education?
- Do the attitudes of the academicians vary according to title, gender, and age?
- Do the types of the workplace, the unit worked and having previous knowledge on distance education influence the attitudes of the academic staff towards distance education?

The findings and the results obtained in the research shed light on the studies conducted for founding and constituting the DEC. In the course of practicing the scale, it was also aimed that awareness of the academic staff be raised with respect to Distance Education Center.

II. Method

Study Group

The universe of this study consists of the 955 academic staff with the titles professor, associate professor, assistant professor, academician, lecturer, research assistant and specialist working at Namık Kemal University in 2015 (Namık Kemal University 2015 Financial Year Performance Program). All the academic staff was contacted via institutional e-mails, and 29,6% (283) of the 955 academicstaff participated in the study.

When the number of staff and the number of participants in NKU are reviewed according to the academic title, it was seen that 21,3% (n=20) of 94 professors, 39,0% (n=32) of 82 associate professors, 20,9% (n=58) of 278 assistant professors, 43,7% (n=90) of 206 academicians, 63,2% (n=36) of 57 lecturers, 20,7% of 222 research assistants and 6,3% of 16 specialists had made a contribution to this research (Table1). 283 (29,6%) out of 955 academic staff working in NKU participated in the research in 2015.

Table1. Thenumber and the ratio of the participants according to academic titles

Academic Title	NKU–The Number of Staff	The Number of Participants (n)	Participation Rate (%)
Professor	94	20	21,3
Associate Professor	82	32	39,0
Assistant Professor	278	58	20,9
Academician	206	90	43,7
Lecturer	57	36	63,2
Research Assistant	222	46	20,7
Specialist	16	1	6,3
Total	955	283	29,6

The distribution of the staff that took part in the research according to the variables, such as academic title, the type of the unit worked for, the unit worked for, gender and age, is given in Table 2.

Table2. The distribution of the research group according to different variables

Tables	**Groups**	**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
Academic title	Professor	20	7,1
	Associate Professor	32	11,3
	Assistant Professor	58	20,5
	Academician	90	31,8
	Lecturer	37	13,1
	Research Assistant	46	16,3
	Total	283	100,0
Type of unit	Faculty	160	56,5
	College	27	9,5
	Vocational School	90	31,8
	Institute	3	1,1
	Research and Application Center	3	1,1
	Total	283	100,0
The unit worked for	The School of Physical Education and Sports	2	0,7
	ÇerkezköyVHS (Vocational High School)	8	2,8
	Çorlu,Faculty of Engineering	33	11,7
	ÇorluVHS	15	5,3
	Institute of Science and Technology	3	1,1
	Faculty of Science and Literature	36	12,7
	Faculty of Architecture, Design and Fine Arts	11	3,9
	HayraboluVHS	4	1,4
	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	16	5,7
	Faculty of Theology	3	1,1
	Career Application and Research Center	2	0,7
	MalkaraVHS	8	2,8
	Marmara EreğlisiVHS	2	0,7
	MuratlıVHS	5	1,8
	Health ServicesVHS	3	1,1
	Health College	5	1,8
	SarayVHS	2	0,7
	Social SciencesVHS	15	5,3
	ŞarköyVHS	3	1,1
	Technical SciencesVHS	29	10,2
	Faculty of Medicine	18	6,4
	Distance Education Application and Research Center	1	0,4
	Faculty of Veterinary Science	3	1,1
	The School of Foreign Languages	15	5,3

	Faculty of Agriculture	41	14,5
	Total	283	100,0
Gender	Female	131	46,3
	Male	152	53,7
	Total	283	100,0
Age	Between 22-29	59	20,8
	Between 30-39	114	40,3
	Between 40-49	73	25,8
	Between 50-59	26	9,2
	Age 60 and above	11	3,9
	Total	283	100,0

Data Collection Tools

In this research, The Attitude Scale for Distance Education, which was developed by Ağır et al. (2008), was used as the data collection tool. Together with the UEYTO,the personal information such as the age group, the academic title, and the unit worked for, etc. of the employeeswere collected through the questionnaire, and the thoughts as to whether or not the courses would be provided through distance education were received, and the participants were asked whether or not they had any knowledge about distance education previously, and they were also asked about their course-receiving and course-providing conditions.

14 of the items within the Attitude Scale for Distance Education used in the research showed a positive characteristic, whereas 7 of them showed a negative characteristic. According to the analyses performed by Ağır et al. (2008), who developed the Scale, it was determined that the scale was composed of 6 factors. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient of the scale was found as 0.814, while the Barlett Testsignificance value proved to be 0.000, and the Cronbach-Alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.835. In this research, in order to calculate the reliability of 21 items within the scale in question, the internal consistency coefficient, which is the "Cronbach-Alpha", was calculated, as well. The general reliability of the scale was found quite as high as alpha=0.933. To put forward the construct validity of the scale, the explanatory (exploratory) factor analysis method was performed. In the Barlett test, it was determined that there was a correlation among the variables included in the factor analysis ($p=0.000<0.05$).The (KMO=0.945>0,60) sampling size was determined to be sufficient for performing the factor analysis. In the practice of the factor analysis, the Varimax method was selected, and the structure of the relationship among the factors was made to remain the same. The variables were gathered under 3 factors in the factor analysis total explained variance of which was 55.955%. It was understood that the Attitude Scale for Distance Education, which was used in accordance with the explained variance value and the Cronbach-Alpha found as regards reliability, was a valid and reliable tool. The factorial structure pertaining to the scale is given in Appendix-1.

In the factor analysis evaluation of the distance education attitude scale, particular attention was paid to dealing with the factors, the eigenvalue of which was greater than one as well as the high level of factor loads showing the significance of the variables within the factor, and the proximity of the factor loads for the same variable. The fact that the reliability coefficient of the factors comprising the scale and the explained variance rates proved to be high suggested that the scale had a powerful factorial structure. The items included in the first factor have been dealt with as the Positive Aspects of Distance Education. The reliability of 11 items comprising the factor referred to as 'Positive Aspects of Distance Education' was determined as alpha= 0.902, while the explained variance value was ascertained as 21.423%. The items included in the second factor have been dealt with as the Negative Aspects of Distance Education.

The reliability of 6 items comprising the factor referred to as 'Negative Aspects of Distance Education' was determined as alpha=0.838, while the explained variance value was ascertained as 19.816%. The items included in the third factor have been dealt with as the Advantages of Distance Education. The reliability of 4 items comprising the factor referred to as the 'Advantages of Distance Education' was determined as alpha= 0.721, while the explained variance value was ascertained as 14.716%. While the scores of the factors in the scale were being calculated, the values of the items within the factor involved were summed up, after which they were divided by the number of items (arithmetic mean), and the factor scores were obtained.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

The data obtained from the research were analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0 program. In the evaluation of the data; numbers, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used as the descriptive statistical methods. T-test was used in the comparison of the quantitative continuous data between two independent groups, while One-Way ANOVA was used in the comparison of the quantitative continuous data between more than two independent groups. In order to determine the differences after the

ANOVA, Scheffe's test was used as the complementary post-hoc analysis. The obtained findings were evaluated at the confidence interval of 95% and at the significance level of 5%.

Findings

The items of the Distance Education Attitude Scale used in the research were gathered under 3 factors as the 'Positive Aspects of Distance Education', the 'Negative Aspects of Distance Education' and the 'Advantages of Distance Education', which show results of the analyses performed.

Table3. The attitude levels of the participants towards distance education

Factor	**N**	**Mean**	**Sd**	**Min.**	**Max.**
Positive Aspects of Distance Education	282	2,851	0,716	1,000	5,000
Negative Aspects of Distance Education	282	2,430	0,757	1,000	4,670
Advantages of Distance Education	282	3,618	0,713	1,000	5,000

The attitude level of the participants that took part in the research for the ''Positive Aspects of Distance Education"factorwas found as moderate (2,851 ± 0,716), while their attitude level for the 'Negative Aspects of Distance Education' factorwas found to be low (2,430 ± 0,757), and their attitude level for the 'Advantages of Distance Education' factorwas found to be high (3,618 ± 0,713). (Table 3)

Table 4. The mean scores of the attitude levels of the participants as regards *the positive aspects of distance education* according to their academic titles

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	P	Difference
Positive Aspects of Distance Education	Professor	20	2,900	0,696	6,080	0,000	5 > 1
	Associate Professor	32	2,858	0,510			5 > 2
	Assistant Professor	58	2,957	0,636			5 > 3
	Academician	90	2,617	0,669			3 > 4
	Lecturer	36	3,327	0,892			5 > 4
	Research Assistant	46	2,767	0,692			5 > 6

At the end of the One-Way Variance Analysis performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the academicians that took part in the research with respect to 'Positive Aspects of Distance Education' had showed any significant difference according to the variable -theacademic title- , the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically significant(F=6,080; p=0,000<0.05). In order to determine the sources of these differences, the complementary post-hoc analysis was performed. The scores of those whose academic title was 'the lecturer' as regards the 'Positive Aspects of Distance Education' were found to be higher (3,327 ± 0,892) than those whose academic title was 'the professor' (2,900 ± 0,696),than those whose academic title was 'the associate professor' (2,858 ± 0,510), than those whose academic title was 'the assistant professor' (2,957 ± 0,636), than those whose academic title was 'the academician' (2,617 ± 0,669) and than those whose academic title was 'the research assistant' (2,767 ± 0,692). (Table4).

Table 5. The mean scores of the attitude levels of the participants as regards *the negative aspects of distance education* according to their academic titles

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	P	Difference
Negative Aspects of Distance Education	Professor	20	2,558	0,716	3,476	0,005	5 > 2
	Associate Professor	32	2,380	0,759			5 > 3
	Assistant Professor	58	2,497	0,671			5 > 4
	Academician	90	2,252	0,714			5>6
	Lecturer	36	2,824	0,907			
	Research Assistant	46	2,355	0,725			

The One-Way Variance Analysis was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the academicians that took part in the research with respect to 'Negative Aspects of Distance Education' had showed any significant difference according to the variable - the academic title -, the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically significant(F=3,476; p=0,005<0.05). In order to determine the sources of these differences, the complementary post-hoc analysis was performed. The scores of those whose academic title was 'the lecturer' as regards the 'Negative Aspects of Distance Education' were found to be higher (2,824 ± 0,907) than those whose academic title was 'the professor' (2,558 ± 0,716), than those whose academic title was 'the associate professor' (2,380 ± 0,759), than those whose academic title was 'the assistant

professor' (2,497 ± 0,671), than those whose academic title was 'the academician' (2,252 ± 0,714) and than those whose academic title was 'the research assistant' (2,355 ± 0,725) (Table5).The One-Way Variance Analysis was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the academicians that took part in the research with respect to 'The Advantages of Distance Education'showed any significant difference according to the variable - the academic title -, and the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically significant (F=2,903; p=0,014<0.05). In order to determine the sources of these differences, the complementary post-hoc analysis was performed.

Table 6. The mean scores of the attitude levels of the participants as regards *the advantages of distance education* according to their academic titles

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	P	Difference
The Advantages of Distance Education	Professor	20	3,563	0,590	2,903	0,014	5 > 1 5 > 2 5 > 3 5 > 4 5 > 6
	Associate Professor	32	3,547	0,627			
	Assistant Professor	58	3,680	0,656			
	Academician	90	3,475	0,770			
	Lecturer	36	3,980	0,739			
	Research Assistant	46	3,603	0,672			

The scores of those whose academic title was 'the lecturer' as regards the 'The Advantages of Distance Education' were found to be higher (3,980 ± 0,739) than those whose academic title was 'the professor' (3,563 ± 0,590), than those whose academic title was 'the associate professor' (3,547 ± 0,627), than those whose academic title was 'the assistant professor' (3,680 ± 0,656), than those whose academic title was 'the academician' (3,475 ± 0,770) and than those whose academic title was 'the research assistant' (3,603 ± 0,672) (Table6).At the end of the tests and analyses performed in accordance with the factors of the distance education attitude scale, which are referred to as the 'Positive Aspects of Distance Education', the 'Negative Aspects of Distance Education' and the 'Advantages of Distance Education', it was determined that the scores of the participants whose academic title was 'the lecturer' were higher than those of the other participants. The reason for this may be the fact that the majority of the common and required (compulsory) courses (CRC) being already provided through distance education in NKU are taught by the lecturers of the university. Since the lecturers are actively using the distance educational system and materials currently, they have the chance to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of distance education as well as its advantages better than anyone else. Although it seems contradictory to see that the attitude scores of the lecturers regarding both the factors as to positive and negative aspects and the factors as to the advantages of distance education proved to be high, this outcome can be stated to be due to the fact that the lecturers have the knowledge of the pros and cons of this system since they are the ones who use the distance education system at most.

Table 7. The mean scores of the attitude levels towards distance education according to the type of *the unit worked for*

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	p	Difference
Positive Aspects of Distance Education	Faculty	159	2,861	0,648	4,949	0,001	2>1 5 >1 1>3 2 >3 5>3
	College	27	3,239	0,784			
	Vocational High School	90	2,677	0,739			
	Institute	3	3,091	0,417			
	Application and Research Center	3	3,788	1,312			
Negative Aspects of Distance Education	Faculty	159	2,434	0,739	4,435	0,002	2 >1 2 >3 5> 3
	College	27	2,877	0,762			
	Vocational High School	90	2,259	0,743			
	Institute	3	2,556	0,192			
	Application and Research Center	3	3,167	0,577			
The Advantages of Distance Education	Faculty	159	3,624	0,650	1,918	0,108	
	College	27	3,815	0,739			
	Vocational High School	90	3,519	0,791			
	Institute	3	3,667	0,382			
	Application and Research Center	3	4,417	1,010			

The One-Way Variance Analysis was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the employees took part in the research with respect to 'The Positive Aspects of Distance Education' showed significant

difference according to the variable - the unit worked for -, the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically significant(F=4,949; p=0,001<0.05). In order to determine the sources of these differences, the complementary post-hoc analysis was performed. The scores of those regarding 'The Positive Aspects of Distance Education'(3,788 ± 1,312), whose unit they worked for was the application and research center, and the scores of those regarding 'The Positive Aspects of Distance Education' (3,239 ± 0,784), whose unit they worked for was a college, were found to be higher than those whose unit they worked for was a faculty (2,861 ± 0,648) and than those whose unit they worked for was a vocational high school (2,677 ± 0,739) (Table7).

In the light of the One-Way Variance Analysis performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the employees that took part in the research with respect to 'The Negative Aspects of Distance Education' had showed any significant difference according to the variable - the unit worked for -, the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically significant (F=4,435; p=0,002<0.05).In order to determine the sources of these differences, the complementary post-hoc analysis was performed. The scores of those regarding 'The Negative Aspects of Distance Education' (2,877 ± 0,762), whose unit they worked for was a college were found to be higher than those whose unit they worked for was a faculty (2,434 ± 0,739) and than those whose unit they worked for was a vocational high school (2,259 ± 0,743) (Table 7).

The One-Way Variance Analysis was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the employees that took part in the research with respect to 'The Advantages of Distance Education' had showed significant difference according to the variable - the unit worked for -, and the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically insignificant (p>0.05) (Table 7).

Table 8. The mean scores of the attitude levels towards distance education according to *age*

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	p
Positive Aspects of Distance Education	Between the ages 22-29	59	2,881	0,760	1,963	0,100
	Between the ages 30-39	114	2,776	0,741		
	Between the ages 40-49	72	2,986	0,586		
	Between the ages 50-59	26	2,909	0,785		
	Age 60 and above	11	2,438	0,698		
Negative Aspects of Distance Education	Between the ages 22-29	59	2,486	0,785	0,443	0,778
	Between the ages 30-39	114	2,402	0,769		
	Between the ages 40-49	72	2,461	0,728		
	Between the ages 50-59	26	2,442	0,816		
	Age 60 and above	11	2,182	0,545		
The Advantages of Distance Education	Between the ages 22-29	59	3,661	0,687	1,493	0,204
	Between the ages 30-39	114	3,568	0,736		
	Between the ages 40-49	72	3,719	0,698		
	Between the ages 50-59	26	3,635	0,617		
	Age 60 and above	11	3,205	0,843		

The One-Way Variance Analysis was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the employees that took part in the research with respect to 'The Positive Aspects of Distance Education', 'The Negative Aspects of Distance Education' and 'The Advantages of Distance Education' had showed any significant difference according to the age variable, the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically insignificant (p>0.05) (Table8).

Table 9. The mean scores of the attitude levels towards distance education according to *gender*

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	t	p
Positive Aspects of Distance Education	Female	130	2,776	0,656	-1,620	0,106
	Male	152	2,915	0,761		
Negative Aspects of Distance Education	Female	130	2,347	0,709	-1,693	0,092
	Male	152	2,500	0,791		
The Advantages of Distance Education	Female	130	3,600	0,585	-0,390	0,690
	Male	152	3,633	0,808		

The T-test was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the employees that took part in the research with respect to 'The Positive Aspects of Distance Education', 'The Negative Aspects of Distance Education' and 'The Advantages of Distance Education' had showed any significant difference according to the gender variable,and the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically insignificant (p>0,05) (Table9).

Table 10. The mean scores of the attitude levels towards distance education according to *the status of having background knowledge of distance education*

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	p
Positive Aspects of Distance Education	None	32	2,668	0,779	1,235	0,292
	I have little knowledge	154	2,863	0,614		
	I have enough knowledge	96	2,893	0,837		
Negative Aspects of Distance Education	None	32	2,438	0,668	0,022	0,978
	I have little knowledge	154	2,421	0,725		
	I have enough knowledge	96	2,441	0,838		
The Advantages of Distance Education	None	32	3,664	0,574	1,141	0,321
	I have little knowledge	154	3,560	0,659		
	I have enough knowledge	96	3,695	0,827		

The One-Way Variance Analysis was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the employees that took part in the research with respect to 'The Positive Aspects of Distance Education', 'The Negative Aspects of Distance Education' and 'The Advantages of Distance Education' had showed any significant difference according to the variable, which is the status of having background knowledge of distance education, the difference among the group averages was found to be statistically insignificant ($p>0.05$) (Table10).

III. Discussion / Result

Namık Kemal University was founded in 2006, and from the time of its foundation on, it has been developing with each passing day along with the opening of new faculties, departments and centers. The Distance Education Center in Namık Kemal University (NKUDEC) is one of these centers. In the foundation and constitution of the Distance Education Center, the examination of the infrastructure, the place and the status of the staff/personnel is of great importance.

In this study, the attitudes of the academic staff working in the cadres of professors, associate professors, assistant professors, academicians, lecturers, specialists and research assistants in Namık Kemal University (NKU) towards distant education were examined according to different variables. In the research, the personal information questionnaire and the distant education attitude scale were used. 29,6% (283) of 955 academic staff working for NKU participated in the research. It was seen that the sampling size of the research was in conformity with the population sampling rate. When the rate of the participation in the research was reviewed in terms of the academic title, it was seen that most of the participation comprised the lecturers with 63.2% and the academicians with 43.7%, according to the rate of those who worked for NKU and took part in the research. The reason for this could be the fact that Turkish Language, Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution and Foreign Language (English) courses in NKU are provided through distant education, and most of the instructors teaching these courses consist of lecturers. It can be said that the instructors teaching these courses have a high level of awareness about distance education and are more sensitive and interested in this subject. Considering the general attitudes, it was determined that the attitude levels of those who participated in the research for 'the positive aspects of distant education'factor proved to be moderate ($2,851 \pm 0,716$), whereas their attitude levels for 'the negative aspects of distant education' factor proved to be low ($2,430 \pm 0,757$), and their attitude levels for the 'the advantages of distant education'factor proved to be high ($3,618 \pm 0,713$).According to these results, it is possible to claim that the participants believe in the superiority of the distance education, have positive attitudes on its positive sides, and think that there are also negative sides although very few.

When the mean scores regarding the positive aspects of distant education, the negative aspects of distant education and the advantages of distant education were reviewed according to the variable, which is the academic title, it was seen that in each of the three factors, the lecturers had the highest attitude score, whereas the academicians had the lowest attitude score. The fact that the lecturers had the highest score in each of the three factors may suggest that the lecturers in NKU are already the group that uses distance education at most and that they have an idea about the positive and negative aspects as well as the advantages of distance education.

When the mean scores of the participants in the research as regards the positive aspects of distance education are reviewed, it was seen that the scores of the participants in charge in a college proved to be high, regardless of the application and research centers for which only 3 participants worked. The reason for this could be that most of the college participants were the academic staff working in the school of foreign languages and that they are currently providing courses through distance education. Similar results showed up in the factor as regards the negative aspects of distance education. In general, it can be stated that the mean scores as regards the negative and positive aspects of distance education pertaining to the participants providing foreign language courses through distance education proved to be higher than those of the other participants, since they knew the pros and cons of this distance education system.

The difference among the mean group scores of the academic staff, who participated in the research, as regards the advantages of distance education was found to be statistically insignificant; however, it was determined that the staff working in a college had exhibited more positive attitudes towards the advantages of distance education. An examination was performed to determine whether or not the mean scores of the participants who participated in the research showed any significant difference according to the age variable with respect to the positive and negative aspects of distance education and its advantages, the difference among the group averages were found to be statistically insignificant. In addition, while the scores of the other age groups were close to one another, the mean score of the group at the age of 60 and above was seen to be rather below that of the other groups. This outcome can be said to have been due to the fact that the group aged 60 and above lacked the knowledge to show any positive or negative attitude towards distance education. The examination of the mean scores of the participants, which was performed according to the gender variable as regards the positive and negative aspects of distance education and its advantages, revealed that the difference between the group averages of male and female participants was found to be statistically insignificant, whereas the male participants were seen to have exhibited more positive attitudes.The fact that the participants had background knowledge of distance education was seen to have posed no significant difference in their attitudes towards distance education.

When the results obtained from this research are reviewed, the results obtained from similar studies (Chick et al., 2002; Carr, 2000; Lindner, 2002; Kılıç andSeyis, 2014; İnan, 2013, Liaw et al., 2007; Ross and Klug, 1999; Lee, 2001; Süer et al., 2005; Ağıret al., 2008; Inman et al., 1999)were seen to have coincided with the results that were achieved from some other studies; yet, they were different from some others, as well. For instance, in the study conducted by the researchers (Ağır et al., 2008) who developed the scale used in this research, the attitudes of the primary school teachers, who were working in private and state schools, towards distance education were examined, and as the result of the research, it was seen that the attitude levels of the teachers towards distance education proved to be positive and close to the moderate value.

In this study, on the other hand, the factors were separately examined, and it was determined that the attitude levels of the participants towards 'the positive aspects of distance education' proved to be moderate, while their attitude levels towards 'the negative aspects of distance education' proved to be low, and their attitude levels towards 'the advantages of distance education' proved to be high. In a research carried out in 2011 along with the participation of the academicians working in Tunceli and Fırat Universities, it was seen that the participants, though they had the knowledge of distance education (81%), did not take part in any distance education practices (93%) (TuncerandTanaş, 2011). In this study, 11,3% of the participants said they had no knowledge of distance education, 54,8% of them said they had little knowledge of it, while 33,9% of them stated that they had enough knowledge of this system, in addition to which 78,8% of them reported that they did not receive any lesson, course or seminar on distance education.

In a research performed by Ross and Klug (1999), the ages and roles of educators became prominent as the factors affecting the attitudes towards distance education. In this study, however, it was seen that the ages and genders of the participants were not that great factors in their attitudes towards distance education; yet, their academic attitudes affected their attitudes. It was seen that the attitudes of the participants, whose academic title was 'the lecturer', as regards the positive and negative aspects and the advantages of distance education proved to be high.

In the light of the findings obtained and the results achieved, the following suggestions can be made:

a) Suggestions for universities:

i. The academic staff can be encouraged not only for distance education programs but also in applying this system in their formal educational courses.
ii. To better comprehend distance education and the conveniences it provides, intra-organizational and extra-organizational workshops and seminars can be arranged.
iii. The distance education system of the university can be put into service to be used by all academicians.
iv. By using cloud technologies, educational clouds that also include the distance educational materials belonging to the university can be formed.

b) Suggestions for the researchers to conduct studies in this subject:

i. The distance education potential of universities can be examined.
ii. By selecting pilot courses, sample course packages for distance education can be prepared for any type of course, andthe pilot practices can be performed, and the results can be analyzed.
iii. In terms of administration, the general attitudes and the readiness levels of institutions towards distance education can be investigated.
iv. Studies can be conducted for universities to use distance education and the social media together.

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APPENDIX-1

The Factorial Structure of Attitude Scale towards Distance Education

Dimension	*Item*	*Factor Load*	*Explained Variance*	*Cronbach's Alpha*
Positive aspects of distance education (Eigenvalue=9.083)	Receiving the assessment and evaluation result quickly in distance education increases student motivation.	0,691	21,423	0,902
	Quality results are achieved from distance education practices.	0,687		
	Distance Education is effective in solving several problems that emerge in formal education practices.	0,661		
	Everyone can receive an education according to their own level through distance education.	0,646		
	Distance Education is more effective than face-to-face education.	0,578		
	Learning through distance education is more enjoyable than learning through face-to-face education.	0,551		
	The accomplishment processes of individuals are followed more easily through distance education.	0,538		
	Distance Education provides effective learning through audi-visual designs and technology.	0,537		
	Distance Education improves self-evaluation skills.	0,529		
	Distance Education has a great power.	0,453		
	Distance Education cannot be performed in a healthy way in our country (t).	0,422		
Negative aspects of distance education (Eigenvalue =1.562)	Face-to-face interaction is necessary for performing education in the best way (t).	0,748	19,816	0,838
	Learning through distance education is anti-social (t).	0,740		
	Face-to-face education is more useful than distance education(t).	0,712		
	The educational environment cannot be controlled in a healthy way through distance education(t).	0,663		
	Distance Education is not interesting(t).	0,551		
	The results of the Distance Education practices are not effective (t).	0,488		
Advantages of distance education (Eigenvalue =1.106)	Distance Education provides as much flexibility to repeat as desired.	0,799	14,716	0,721
	In distant education, access into information is quite fast due to sharing the accumulation of knowledge on the internet environment.	0,730		
	The fact that there is no restriction to time and place through distant education provides the permanency of education.	0,596		
	Equality of opportunity is ensured through distant education.	0,509		
Total Variance: 55.955%				