



A CONSTRUCTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS THROUGH ONLINE PHOTOVOICE (OPV) DURING COVID-19

Ahmet TANHAN¹, Gökmen ARSLAN², K. Fatih YAVUZ³, J. Scott YOUNG⁴, İlhan ÇİÇEK⁵, Mehmet Nurullah AKKURT⁶, İhsan Çağatay ULUS⁷, Ebru Talibe GÖRÜNMEK⁸, Ramazan DEMİR⁹, Fatma KÜRKER¹⁰, Cihat ÇELİK¹¹, Mehmet Şirin AKÇA¹², Büşra ÜNVERDİ¹³, Hamza ERTÜRK¹⁴, Kelly-ann ALLEN¹⁵

Abstract: We used Online Photovoice (OPV) to (1) examine mental health facilitators and barriers for counseling students during COVID-19; (2) advocate support towards wellbeing and address mental health issues; (3) investigate students' attributions of facilitators and barriers to different systems; and, (4) test the use of an already adapted Turkish version of OPV. We used OPV in Turkish to understand students' lived experiences and Online Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (OIPA) to analyze students' responses. Overall, 98 students (63 females, 35 males) participated in this study. We found 17 main facilitator themes (e.g., support of family and friends and socialization with them, 32%, n = 31; spending time in/with nature, 31%, n = 30; benefitting from books, 18%, n = 18) and 14 barrier main themes (e.g., restriction of freedom, 29%, n = 28; psychosocial and spiritual issues, 20%, n = 20; not being able to physically come together with others, 19%, n = 19). We discussed our results and provided functional and meaningful implications for research, education, mental health, and advocacy areas. Future researchers, educators, mental health providers, and administrators can use OPV and OIPA together or separately to enhance overall wellbeing and address related issues.

Keywords: Online Photovoice (OPV), COVID-19, Mental Health, Counseling, Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), Online Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (OIPA).

COVID-19 SÜRECİNDE RUH SAĞLIĞI KOLAYLAŞTIRICI VE ZORLAŞTIRICILARINI ONLINE SESLİFOTO (OSF) İLE YAPICI BİR ŞEKİLDE ANLAMAK

Öz: Bu araştırmada dört temel amacımız vardı: (1) Online Seslifoto (OSF) yöntemini kullanarak psikolojik danışmanlık ve rehberlik ana bilim dalında okuyan öğrencilerinin COVID-19 sürecinde ruh sağlığı kolaylaştırıcı ve zorlaştırıcılarını ele almak, (2) genel iyilik halini artırmak için var olan kolaylaştırıcıların artmasını ve ruh sağlığı meselelerin ele alınmasını sağlamak için aktif sosyal savunuculuk yapmak, (3) öğrencilerin kolaylaştırıcı ve zorlaştırıcıları hangi sistemlere atfettiklerini incelemek ve (4) Türkçe'ye daha önce adapte edilmiş OSF'nin işlevliliğini test etmek. OSF'yi öğrencilerin yaşantılarını yani veriyi toplamak ve Online Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analizi (OYFA) ise bu yaşantıları sistematik bir şekilde anlamak ve analiz etmek için kullandık. Bu çalışmaya toplamda 98 genç öğrenci (63 kadın 35 erkek) katıldı. Çalışmanın sonunda, 17 ana kolaylaştırıcı (örn., aile ve arkadaşların desteği ve onlarla sosyalleşmek, %32, n = 31; doğa ile zaman geçirmek, %31, n = 30; kitaplardan faydalanmak, %18, n = 18) ve 14 tane zorlaştırıcı ana tema ortaya çıktı (örn., özgürlüğün kısıtlanması, %29, n = 28; psikososyal ve manevi meseleler, %20, n = 20; fiziksel olarak diğer insanlarla bir araya gelememek %19, n =19). Yazarlar olarak tartışmanın sonuçlarını diğer çalışmalar bağlamında tartıştık ve araştırma, ruh sağlığı, eğitim ve aktif sosyal savunuculuk alanları için anlamlı ve işlevsel önerilerde bulunduk.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Online Seslifoto (OSF), COVID-19, Ruh Sağlığı, Psikolojik Danışmanlık, Topluluk Temelli Katılımlı Araştırma (TeTKA), Online Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz (OYFA).

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has caused anxiety¹, psychological problems, increased symptoms of mental illness², and depression³ in university students. Family income stability and

¹ Wenjun Cao vd., "The Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Epidemic on College Students in China", *Psychiatry Research* 287 (2020); Sara Marelli vd., "Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Sleep Quality in University Students and Administration Staff", *Journal of Neurology* 268/1 (2020), 1-8.

² Marelli, "Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on Sleep Quality in University Students and Administration Staff", 1-8.

³ Wanjie Tang vd., "Prevalence and Correlates of PTSD and Depressive Symptoms One Month after the Outbreak of the COVID-19 Epidemic in a Sample of Home-Quarantined Chinese University Students", *Journal of Affective Disorders* 274/1 (2020), 1-7.



living with parents are examples of protective factors against anxiety in this process.⁴ In contrast, spending free time on the internet during quarantine promotes anxiety.⁵ Young adults with high internet and social media use were more exposed to fake news published on social media regarding COVID-19 pandemic process⁶, struggle to adapt to online education practices⁷ and create social relationships via online education.⁸ Friend support is positively correlated with resilience levels⁹ and individuals who have a low level of resilience are affected more negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic process.¹⁰ Sleep quality seems to worsen for the students in their graduation year. Biological, social, cognitive, and environmental changes, together with the increase in anxiety, can lead to mental problems in adolescence and young adulthood.¹¹ Perception of control of changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is lower in university students than individuals with lower education levels, due to their different levels of awareness and expectations from authorities.¹²

In sum, suspension of education with the first coronavirus cases in Turkey, the problems experienced by students related to distance education structured afterwards,

⁴ Cao, "The Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Epidemic on College Students in China".

⁵ İlhan Çiçek vd., "Psychological Inflexibility Predicts Depression and Anxiety during COVID-19", *Manuscript submitted for publication* (2020).

⁶ Ali Fikret Aydın, "Post-Truth Dönemde Sosyal Medyada Dezenformasyon: COVID-19 (Yeni Koronavirüs) Pandemi Süreci", *Asya Studies* 4/12 (2020), 76-90.

⁷ Naiara Ozamiz-Etxebarria vd., "Stress, Anxiety, and Depression Levels in the Initial Stage of the COVID-19 Outbreak in a Population Sample in the Northern Spain", *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* 36/4 (2020), 1-9.

⁸ Elgiz Yılmaz Altuntaş vd., "COVID-19 Pandemisi Sürecinde Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yükseköğretim Kurumlarının Uzaktan Eğitime Yönelik Stratejilerine ve Öğrenme Deneyimlerine İlişkin Algı Düzeyleri", *Halkla İlişkiler ve Reklam Çalışmaları E-Dergisi* 3/2 (2020), 8-23; Özlem Şen - Gaye Kızılcıoğlu, "Covid-19 Pandemi Sürecinde Üniversite Öğrencilerinin ve Akademisyenlerin Uzaktan Eğitime Yönelik Görüşlerinin Belirlenmesi", *International Journal of 3D Printing Technologies and Digital Industry* 4/3 (2020), 239-252.

⁹ Aydın, "Post-Truth Dönemde Sosyal Medyada Dezenformasyon: COVID-19 (Yeni Koronavirüs) Pandemi Süreci", 76-90; Şerife Terzi, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Psikolojik Dayanıklılıkları ve Algıladıkları Sosyal Destek Arasındaki İlişki", *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi* 3/29 (2008), 1-11.

¹⁰ Gülin Yazıcı Çelebi, "COVID 19 Salgınına İlişkin Tepkilerin Psikolojik Sağlık Açısından İncelenmesi", *IBAD Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8 (2020), 471-483.

¹¹ Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl - Jennifer R. Muller, "Correlates of Help-Seeking in Adolescents", *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 25/6 (1996), 705-731.

¹² Tutku Ekiz vd., "Bireylerin Sağlık Anksiyetesi Düzeyleri ile COVID-19 Salgını Kontrol Algısının Karşılaştırılması", *Uluslararası Sağlık Yönetimi ve Stratejileri Araştırma Dergisi* 6/1 (2020), 139-154.

staying away from the school environment, difficulties in conducting social and romantic relationships, future anxiety and economic issues affect the mental health of university students in Turkey during the pandemic process.

1. GAP IN THE LITERATURE

Studies on college students' mental health in Turkey demonstrated that the some of common issues to be depression, adjustment problems, economic problems, family expectations¹³, and close and romantic relationship issues.¹⁴ Also, a study indicated that 37 out of 1404 university students had a very high level of anxiety and 225 of them had a high level of anxiety; 115 of them had very high level of depression and 388 had a high level of depression.¹⁵

Over half (52.2%) of students in the counseling department, who continue their undergraduate education in Turkey, show high subjective well-being¹⁶. Problem-solving skills increase as their grade levels increase.¹⁷ Counseling students' psychiatric symptoms are lower compared to other departments.¹⁸ As the counseling students' level of belonging to their profession increases, their existential anxiety decreases.¹⁹ Clinical depression was observed in one-third of counseling students.²⁰ Although a study showed that the psychological resilience levels of counseling students were lower than other

¹³ Serdar Erkan vd., “Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yaşadıkları Problemler ve Psikolojik Yardım Arama Gönüllükleri”, *Eğitim ve Bilim* 37/164 (2012), 94-107; Nursel Topkaya - Betül Meydan, “Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Problem Yaşadıkları Alanlar, Yardım Kaynakları ve Psikolojik Yardım Alma Niyetleri”, *Trakya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 3/1 (2013), 25-37.

¹⁴ İlknur Pektaş - Ayşegül Bilge, “Ege Üniversitesi İzmir Atatürk Sağlık Yüksekokulu Öğrencilerinin Problem Alanlarının Belirlenmesi”, *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/13 (2007), 83-98.

¹⁵ Okan Bilgin vd., “Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Psikolojik Belirtilerinin İncelenmesi”, *Karaelmas Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* 8/1 (2020), 27-41.

¹⁶ Merve Gündüz, *Psikolojik Danışman Adaylarının Stresle Başa Çıkma Tarzlarının Çok Yönlü Eylemli Kişilik Özelliklerine, Öznel İyi Oluşlarına ve Risk Faktörlerine Göre İncelenmesi* (İstanbul: Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2018).

¹⁷ Adem Gültekin, *Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik Öğrencilerinin Problem Çözme Becerilerinin İncelenmesi* (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2006).

¹⁸ Çiğdem Yavuz Güler, *Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Öğrencilerinde Öznel İyi Olma Hali, Psikiyatrik Belirtiler ve Bazı Kişilik Özellikleri: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2006).

¹⁹ Ourchan Kourou, *Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Öğrencilerinin Ait Olma ile Varoluşsal Kaygı Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2019).

²⁰ Semai Tuzcuoğlu - Bülent Korkmaz, “Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Öğrencilerinin Boyun Eğici Davranış ve Depresyon Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi”, *Marmara Üniversitesi Atatürk Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 14 (2001), 135-152.



departments, other studies have found no significant differences between departments.²¹ When examining studies on the mental health of counseling students, these studies were quite a few in number, these studies had conflicting results, and it was understood that counseling students' wellbeing and issues should be considered separately.

There are a limited number of studies in the literature that address the mental health, subjective well-being, or biopsychosocial spiritual issues of university students, especially counseling students, in Turkey before the pandemic. There are also a limited number of studies focused on well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.²² For this reason, the present study will both contribute to the literature and shed light on the mental health services to be provided to university students and especially to counseling students.

Based on the literature review, it was evident that the COVID-19 pandemic caused biopsychosocial, spiritual, and economic issues for undergraduate students. Tanhan²³ and Tanhan et al.²⁴ suggested addressing students' situations at the field of study level (e.g., counseling students). Tanhan²⁵ suggested the Online Photovoice (OPV) method and stated that the method allows researchers to understand counseling students and to examine the facilitating and complicating factors in the pandemic process from the students' perspectives.

²¹ Vesile Oktan vd., "Psikolojik Doęum Sırasının Psikolojik Saęlımlığın Yordanmasındaki Rolünün İncelenmesi", *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14/1 (2014), 140-152; Sinem Atarbay, *Farklı Bölümlerde Öğrenim Gören Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sosyal Kaygı Düzeylerinin Psikolojik Dayanıklılıklarına Etkisi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2017).

²² Ahmet Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", *Turkish Studies* 15/4 (2020), 1029-1086; Ahmet Tanhan vd., "A Proposed Framework Based on Literature Review of Online Contextual Mental Health Services to Enhance Wellbeing and Address Psychopathology during COVID-19", *Electronic Journal of General Medicine* 17/6 (2020).

²³ Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", 1029-1086.

²⁴ Tanhan vd., "A Proposed Framework Based on Literature Review of Online Contextual Mental Health Services to Enhance Wellbeing and Address Psychopathology during COVID-19".

²⁵ Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", 1029-1086.

2. RESEARCH PURPOSE

In this present study we had four objectives: (1) to examine the most important biological, psychological, social (biopsychosocial), spiritual, and economic factors that make life either easier or more difficult for counseling students in training in South East of Turkey in the process of the outbreak, by using the Online Photovoice method (OPV) through the participants' unique perspective; (2) to engage in active social advocacy in order to increase the factors that make life easier to the required level and to solve the problems by effectively addressing the factors that make life difficult by delivering the results online to the related persons and authorities with the help of the volunteer participants; (3) to identify which systems of the Ecological Systems Theory (EST) the counseling students attribute the facilitating and challenging factors, and finally, (4) to test the use of already adapted Turkish version of OPV with counseling students as a different and under studied sample who (especially the seniors) partially provides psychosocial services to others during the pandemic and normal time.

All these increase the value of this paper significantly since it is the first paper focusing on counseling students in Turkey and their biopsychosocial, spiritual, and economic aspects.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Researchers need to use contextually sensitive theoretical frameworks or concept maps for well-grounded research and effective services.²⁶ In our research we utilized Ecological Systems Theory (EST), Online Photovoice (OPV), and Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to construct our theoretical framework as suggested by previous researchers.²⁷ We named our framework as a constructive understanding of counseling students mental health through OPV from a CBPR and EST perspective. We constantly reminded the framework to each other as the researchers and all others supporting the study to make sure we strive, as much as possible, to get the voice and experience of the participants. We also stressed our framework to have a more meaningful, joyful, mindful, and contextually effective research process and outcomes. Due to the limited space, researchers and readers

²⁶ Ahmet Tanhan - J. Scott Young, "Muslims and Mental Health Services: A Concept Map and a Theoretical Framework", *Journal of Religion and Health* (2021).

²⁷ Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", 1029-1086; Ahmet Tanhan - Robert W. Strack, "Online Photovoice to Explore and Advocate for Muslim Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Issues: Ecological Systems Theory and Ally Development", *Current Psychology* 39 (2020).



interested in the framework may get more detailed information regarding our framework by reviewing Tanhan²⁸'s article.

4. METHOD

As the researchers we utilized the framework explained above. The framework formed every process of the research, especially the methodology part. Researchers primarily searched the literature on (a) college students' mental health, with a particular focus on mental health during the pandemic, and whether there were previous studies using OPV with the students, and (b) a specific attention to the students in counseling department during the pandemic.

5. PARTICIPANTS

In this study, 101 counseling students in Southeast of Turkey completed the study. Three students participated twice; therefore, we removed them. In this way, a final number of 98 (63 female and 35 male) constituted our sample. In this study, researchers used a convenience and snowball sampling method asking the students at the department to pass the invitation to the study to their friends at the department. Participants were undergraduate students (n = 90) at the counseling department and eight graduate students were from other schools who have been collaborating with the first author through a counseling and research clinic he has been running at the department. Of the participants, 90 reported their marital status as single and eight as married. In terms of socioeconomic status, 21 reported low, 72 middle, and five as high. In terms of accommodation, 63 reported living in a place with garden and 35 reported living in a place without it.

6. PROCEDURE

We reviewed Turkish and English literature on mental health, OPV, and how the university students functioning during COVID-19 outbreak. Some researchers found that university students exposed to biopsychosocial spiritual and financial challenges that were also related to mental health issues.²⁹ They suggested to employ OPV to carry out further research on mental health of counselors-in-training during the COVID-19 outbreak. After all, we got an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to proceed. The researchers cooperated with several interested university

²⁸ Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", 1029-1086.

²⁹ Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", 1029-1086; Tanhan vd., "A Proposed Framework Based on Literature Review of Online Contextual Mental Health Services to Enhance Wellbeing and Address Psychopathology during COVID-19".

students as partners of the study. Thus, the research team was set up from the CBPR perspective. The team worked on the research process through consultation and discussion, then improved the final online form to recruit participants.

7. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS: ONLINE SURVEY

We created an online survey that contained the IRB approval, social demographic items, and a consent form. The counseling students as the participants had three options including reading the written text or following an audio or reading document. All these three different documents provided the same information and enabled participants to understand how to get involved in the research. The documents presented the Turkish version, adapted by Tanhan (2020), of the OPV and the guidelines for a more engaged participating process. The different forms of the same materials made it easy to participate. The materials strengthened OPV participation process. Any participant with less privileges (low internet connection, difficulties with reading, seeing, or hearing, etc.) had the opportunity to use the most appropriate documents among the three forms of the documents.

8. CONSENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

We provided detailed information on the research to the participants through the consent form. In the demographic information form, the participants answered some questions to provide demographic information such as gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, and type of residence they live in during the pandemic.

9. VIDEO, AUDIO, AND WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

As the researchers, we presented participants with three different documents (video, audio, and written document) explaining what OPV is. The documents explained the same things. They explained in detail (a) what the meaning of the OPV is and (b) how to participate in OPV study more effectively and meaningfully. Tanhan (2020) created the video from a COVID-19 perspective to facilitate participants' and researchers' understanding of OPV and participation in OPV research and experiential activities if they like. From our framework perspective, the provision of these different documents makes a great sense to increase participation of the ones with difficulties with reading. Such consideration was strongly suggested by Tanhan and Strack (2020) and Tanhan (2020) while using OPV because such documents make the process easy. Therefore, having a video makes sense within our theoretical framework for the research. Tanhan (2020) provided all the documents in details.



10. ONLINE PHOTOVOICE (OPV) STEPS

We used Tanhan's (2020) research in which they identified five steps for an effective, enjoyable, and easy engagement for OPV research and activities. The steps are much more provided in detail in Tanhan (2020). The participants followed the following five steps. The students completed the steps to report the facilitators and barriers for a thorough participation.

In the 1st step entitled, *facilitators (support, strength)*, the participants provided at least one and at most ten important facilitators that first come to their mind. They wrote all these in a provided box in the form. However, the participant took time to decide which one is the most important and kept that in mind to move on. In the 2nd step entitled, taking *photos for the most important facilitator*, the participant took one or more photo(s) representing the most important facilitator.

In the 3rd step, *uploading photos and stories*, the participants uploaded only one photograph. The participants were recommended to upload the most representative photograph. Then they used the following SHOWED acronym questions to share their story. Tanhan (2020) adapted SHOWED questions and the acronym to Turkish and called the acronym as GÖZSAN for a more contextually effective research.³⁰

S: What do you **See** in the picture representing a facilitator for you or your population during COVID-19 outbreak? What do you **See** in the picture representing a barrier for you or your population during the coronavirus outbreak?

H: What is **Happening** in your photograph?

O: How does the photo and factor relate to **(y)Our** life as a student in counseling or your community?

W: **What** are they that create or contribute to this most important facilitator? **What** are they that create or contribute to this most important barrier?

E: What have you **Experienced** while taking your photo, writing your message, and submitting them?

³⁰ See details in Tanhan, "COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması", 1029-1086.

D: What can we (as professionals in mental health, educators, researchers, counseling students in training, etc.) **Do** about this?

In the 4th step, entitled *theme(s) or metaphor(s)*, the participants provided one to three key words, themes, and/or metaphors to summarize the photo and story. In the 5th step, entitled *how we attribute the facilitators and barriers*, the participants attributed their themes to one or more of the levels of EST.

The participants followed the same steps for the most important barrier (concern, issue) following completing the most important facilitator. Tanhan (2020) provided more detailed information on these steps.

11. ANALYSES

As the researchers, we, found the use of Online Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (OIPA) to be the most effective to understand the facilitators and barriers while protecting the students' voices. It contains five steps: (I) doing primary analyses on data (e.g., photos, captions, themes, research form) for missing information, (II) checking the data for confidentiality (e.g., any photos with faces or private property), (III) classifying the facilitator themes, (IV) classifying the barrier themes, and finally (V) analyzing how the students attribute the themes to EST aspects. The developer of OPV, Tanhan (2020) and Tanhan and Strack (2020), explained OIPA in more details.

12. RESULTS

As the researchers, we, analyzed the data based on the students' unique perspective and especially their themes. We provided the results in four main parts: Main Facilitator Themes During Covid-19 Process, Barrier/ Concern Main Themes During Covid-19 Process, Students' Attributing Facilitator and Barrier Themes, and the results obtained from data analysis. Our results also overall align with other recent OPV research.³¹

Main Facilitator Themes During Covid-19 Process

We found 17 crucial facilitative groups and shared them in Table 1. The researchers clustered the themes which are taken by only one participant under the

³¹ Ahmet Tanhan vd., "Online Education during COVID-19 through Online Photovoice (OPV) and Community-based Participatory Research", *Manuscript under review* (2021); Songül Tümkaya vd., "Using Online Photovoice (OPV) to Understand Youths' Perceptions of Distance Education during COVID-19", *Manuscript under review* (2021).



“other” theme. The researchers examined and compared all themes with existing literature in detail in the “Discussion” part. Moreover, in the discussion part; the researchers provided some examples of pictures, stories and themes shared by participants to represent main themes. Some other researchers also found some similar results.³²

Table 1: Main Facilitator Themes

Main Facilitator Themes	%	N = 98
1. Spending time with the family, support of the family, communicating with friends, support of friends, socialization, togetherness, sincerity.	32	31
2. Nature, plants, animals, green life, garden, fresh air, spending time with land, sea, village environment.	31	30
3. Books, reading book and benefits of reading book.	18	18
4. Calmness, quietness, feeling peaceful.	14	14
5. Focusing on the self, knowing yourself, recognizing yourself, back to basics, using the resources.	12	12
6. Discovering, learning new things, developing	10	10
7. Being hopeful for good future, hope	10	10
8. Online education, listening lectures, feeling belonging to school, support of instructors	9	9
9. Meaningful life, meaning of life	8	8
10. Spirituality, worship, prayer, religion	8	8
11. Being productive	4	4

³² Yakup Subasi vd., “College Students’ Experiences of Distance Education in the Context of COVID-19 through Online Photovoice (OPV)”, *Manuscript under review* (2021); Ahmet Tanhan vd., “Perception of Online Education during COVID-19: Online Photovoice (OPV) and Ecological Systems Theory”, *Manuscript under review* (2021); Kürşat Ögülmüş vd., “Evaluation of Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions about Specific Learning Difficulties through Online Photovoice (OPV) Methodology”, *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 9/2 (2021), 161-169.

12. Being mindful, focusing on “now and here”	4	4
13. Determination, willpower, time management	3	3
14. Entertainment, music, taking photographs	3	3
15. Having financial resources	3	3
16. Being motivated	2	2

Below we have provided three representative photos, captions, and themes provided by the participants. We translated participants’ stories and themes as they are with their mistakes (e.g., misspellings, unclarity) to show the participant’s unique perspective and conditions while answering the questions.



Figure 1: The Participant 67 submitted the photo to express the most important facilitator (support, strength) during COVID-19

The student shared the following story for their facilitator factor for their mental health:

The picture shows that even if my environment is so crowded, I still listen myself by being myself alone. Unfortunately, an individual is not giving importance to him/herself as he/she cares and listens to others. That process provided me with listening myself, understanding myself, thinking about what I want for my life now and in future. Calmness made me feel okay after a cadent life. I reasoned with myself. I thought about what I did in the past, what I am doing now and what I want to do in future. Of course, I enjoyed with being “now

and here” which I learned because I study this major. I listened my body. It seems that it tells a lot...

The student shared the following themes: “Journey to inner side of my self”



Figure 2: The Participant 69 submitted the photo to express the most important facilitator (support, strength) during COVID-19

The student shared the following story for their facilitator factor for their mental health:

I wish that you have healthy day. Firstly, I thought and reasoned a lot about myself, my life, what I do and what I want to do during the pandemic process. When it comes to the photograph, I found exact picture that I want because I felt myself as being in a house like this wherever my home is and whatever happens. Because of the disease, I had an ambiguous situation around me; I locked myself at home, isolate myself like this house as it is also isolated from the other houses and people inside the house are isolated from other people spiritually. I felt mindful in this process, and I felt like being at a house as in the photograph and I asked myself that what I am doing while I have the same people around me every day, I tried a lot on thinking, feeling mindful, making sense of what I have around me. Then I realized that I was not being able to think about myself because of daily rushes and I was trying to carry out my daily routines. When I think that I am in a house like in this photograph, my thoughts became

facilitators. Sometimes I tried to think a lot and made sense of my worships that I pray every day, I thought when I was preparing food and eating, I saw the nature and that the things Allah (referring God) gave us. I did all these things as being bored by looking this photograph but also as being a psychological counselor who tries to be beneficial. I changed a lot of things in my inner world, and I learned caring during this process of being in a home. Of course, my exact learning is not possible because life is so changeable however it was the beginning of good learnings for me to think and look forward hopefully and not being able to leave the house.

The student shared the following themes: “thinking mindfully, making sense, looking (forward) hopefully”



Figure 3: The Participant 59 submitted the photo to express the most important facilitator (support, strength) during COVID-19

The student shared the following story for their facilitator factor for their mental health:

To be able to spend my time with my husband and child was a facilitator for me during this difficult process. There are three of us on carpet in the photograph. For the first time of the last 5 years I spent that much time for home. Covid-19 as a huge problem led to happiness for me and for my family. When our lives' and our beloved ones' lives at risk that much, it is required to be together



and to meet only the basic needs to survive. If everyone of us can give up greed of consumption even a little, I guess we can have healthier mind and body.

The student shared the following themes: “Hope is on the play carpet”

Barrier/ Concern Main Themes During Covid-19 Process

The researchers found 14 main barrier themes from 98 participants’ data. The researchers demonstrated main barrier themes and the percentages in Table 2. The researchers gave the percentages in order and clustered the themes which are taken by only one participant under the “other” theme. The researchers examined and compared the results with existing literature in detail in the “Discussion” part. Moreover, in the discussion part, the authors gave some examples of pictures, stories and themes shared by some participants to represent main themes.

Main Barrier Themes	%	N = 98
1. Restriction of freedom: prohibitions, not being able go outside	29	28
2. Psychosocial and spiritual issues: feeling hopeless, desperate, weak, bored, lonely, ambiguity, darkness, pessimistic	20	20
3. Not being able get together physically with family, friends, relatives and the loved ones	19	19
4. Psychopathologic issues: depression, anxiety, loss, grief,	17	17
5. Financial problems	12	12
6. Problems of online education/ distance learning	11	11
7. Being away from nature, being stuck in the concrete buildings and apartments	11	11
8. Being afraid of effects of Corona: worrying for himself and the loved ones, feeling danger of death	10	10
9. Biological problems: use of masks, not being able to breath properly, eyestrain because of online education, nauseaion	8	8
10. Not being able to do counseling practices	7	7

11. Having communication problems with family members: discussions, not being able to develop empathy, not being able to establish a mutual relation, always watching tv and not speaking	6	6
12. Not being mindful	4	4
13. Selfish behaviors of people	2	2
14. Other: being health professional, negative effects of media,	3	3

Table 2. Main Barrier Themes



Figure 4: The Participant 79 submitted the photo to express the most important barrier during COVID-19

The student shared the following story for their barrier factor for their mental health:

Staying in a closed area rather than walking around broad and spacious areas freely was difficult for me, especially after a while, even if the people that I share this closed area are really valuable for me, permanence of these people and environment started to depressing, I had times that I missed the past and future, in this photograph I see the broadness of not being stucked in an apartment flat, I see a garden and natural area that belongs only a property. It is a photograph that

I took in abroad, I miss the past and those days and it is like it is too past and I feel sorry like I will never have the opportunity to see those places again. The barriers are being away from this broadness and freedom, feeling stucked, having the relationship with the nature, which is so essential need for human being; as luxurious in cities.

The student shared the following themes: “You want to raise your both hands and run then you crash the furniture in your room.”



Figure 5: The Participant 18 submitted the photo to express the most important barrier during COVID-19

The student shared the following story for their barrier factor for their mental health:

In the photograph the man is going on a way but at the end of the way there is a big question mark, so he does not know where to arrive. I came home for three weeks at 15th March which is the last day of exams but the process lengthened out I was a really big ambiguity about when the schools will open when the lessons will start those questions thought and confused my mind a lot in this process and this made me tired actually especially I had a lot of plans for the spring they also were pending While asking the questions of will I be able to do these, is it possible or is not it possible the ambiguities made harder the quarantine process. Even now while I am writing this, I do not have information of when the schools will open and when this process will end that’s why I am still stressed. Actually, ambiguity always makes people tired when we think about what people who work in this major can do, we can suggest people to find

small things that make them motivated to quit anxiety for future and we can infuse people into live today. We can ask them to keep gratitude or happiness notebooks so that they can be more aware of the beauties 🍀

The student shared the following themes: “Steam in my life”



Figure 6: The Participant 63 submitted the photo to express the most barrier facilitator during COVID-19

The student shared the following story for their barrier factor for their mental health:

Not being able to leave the house, not being able to be with nature, not being able to see the voice of birds and trees closely was hard for me during this difficult process that we experience. Not being able to close to soil whose products are so important for humanity and continuity of life made me feel bad and it became a barrier for me. Of course, when we think in terms of the damage that people cause to nature, it may be positive for nature. In the photograph that I uploaded it can be bothering that the place is so quiet, empty and calm although it was a very crowded place before Covid-19. When I see that photograph it casts a pall upon me. Unfortunately, we cannot do anything until this process ends, we need to continue staying at home.

The student shared the following themes: “Staying at home saves life.”



Attribution of the Facilitator and Barrier Themes to EST Levels

According to Ecological Systems Theory, there are four systems: Individual/Intrapsychic, Microsystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem. All the participants (N = 98) have attributed their themes EST levels as we showed percentages and frequencies of the themes to the attributed systems in Table 3.

EST Levels	Individual/ Intrapsychic	Microsystem	Exosystem	Macrosystem
Factors				
Facilitator Factors	%89 (n = 87)	%69 (n = 68)	%34 (n = 33)	%32 (n = 31)
Barrier Factors	%77 (n = 76)	%68 (n = 67)	%54 (n = 53)	%52 (n = 51)

Table 3: Attribution of the Facilitator and Barrier Themes to EST Levels

The Results Obtained from Sharing the Study with Other Key People

One of the important steps of the study is to share the results with the related authority and institutions to constitute and maintain the facilitators and find solutions to barriers. Therefore, the researchers shared the results and will continue to share them with related individuals, groups, and institutions for advocacy. With such advocacy, the authors aim to create effective solutions for barriers and to increase participants' wellbeing with face to face and online meetings.

13. DISCUSSION

We have provided discussion section in two separate sections. We first discussed the most important facilitators and then the most important barriers. Our findings align with a few other recent OPV studies conducted during the pandemic.³³

Discussion of the most important facilitator/strengths

The study resulted in 19 main facilitator themes that contributed to overall wellbeing of counseling students during COVID-19 pandemic. The main facilitator

³³ Subasi vd., "College Students' Experiences of Distance Education in the Context of COVID-19 through Online Photovoice (OPV)"; Tmkaya vd., "Using Online Photovoice (OPV) to Understand Youths' Perceptions of Distance Education during COVID-19".

themes and their frequencies are ranked as follows in the study: support of family and friends (32%, n = 31), spending time in nature (31%, n = 30), reading books (18%, n = 18), feeling peaceful (14%, n = 14), focusing on self (12%, n = 12), learning new things (10%, n = 10), hope for the future (10%, n = 10), sense of belonging to school (9%, n = 9), meaning of life (8%, n = 8), spirituality (8%, n = 8), being productive (4%, n = 4), being mindful (4%, n = 4), willpower (3%, n = 3), entertainment (3%, n = 3).

Two main facilitating factors for counseling students' overall wellbeing was focused on community and nature (63%, n = 61). Students indicated that spending time with the family and friends, support of the family and friends, socialization, togetherness, and sincerity as the strongest facilitating factor followed by nature, plants, animals, and fresh air as the second strongest facilitating factor. In their recent study with Muslim college students, Tanhan and Strack (2020) highlighted the importance of community support for college students. Yazici Celebi (2020) emphasized the importance of support from the community during the pandemic and asserted that individuals must understand the differentiation between physical distancing and social distancing. Individuals might be isolating themselves from others to keep safe and abide by the rules however that does not require individuals being disconnected from their support mechanisms. College students are somehow digital natives and their familiarity with technology allows them to use online platforms to connect with others where they may experience a sense of belonging. Another important support mechanism was family, and participants who were with their family expressed gratitude for the family support and quality time spent together with the family. For instance, P(34) stated that *"It is like a miracle to not feel alone in these difficult times and feel the support of your family and experience the sense of togetherness."*

The second facilitating theme was nature. Counseling students indicated that spending time outside in nature and with animals as a facilitating factor. Students who were in rural areas also expressed the advantage of being in a village environment. Jiang, Chang, and Sullivan (2014) stated that exposure to nearby nature can help in stress reduction and increase individuals' ability to deal with stressors. Another recent



study conducted by Slater, Christiana, and Gustat³⁴ (2020) asserted the importance of physical activity and exposure to nature or green space to reduce the stress level during the pandemic. It is certain that participants who stated spending time in nature as a facilitating factor have already benefited from access to green spaces. Participant (42) stated that *“In this picture, I see a turtle in the greenery, people can go to green areas while remaining physically distant. I believe that these places can be even good for those who are sick. As a society, I think our nation needs these places (green places).”*

The third facilitating factor was reading books. Eighteen participants stated the benefits of reading books as it created an escape into a world of their own. Participants became aware of the time limitations they had before the pandemic and voiced their satisfaction with how the pandemic has allowed them to spend more time reading books for personal and professional development. Participant (61) stated that *“The experiences I have while reading a book are just for me, and I end up finding myself in desolate places.”* Existing literature also supports this notion that reading a book can be an effective stress reduction strategy. Király et al. (2020) asserted the importance of relaxation and stress-reduction techniques such as reading, meditation, and mindfulness exercises to maintain physical and mental wellbeing. In line with the previous statements, participants indicated calmness, quietness, and feeling peaceful as the fourth factor that facilitates the overall wellbeing of students. The fifth facilitating factor, which is focusing on self, was also another suggestion made by Király et al. (2020) to ensure mental wellbeing. Authors suggested that individuals who live with their family or others, which is a common case for college students during the pandemic, should find ways of being alone and establish some boundaries to prevent conflict and reduce the frustration that may arise from being confined in the same place for a long time. Several participants shared their desire and need to have alone time whether within the house or outside to be able to allocate time to focus on themselves. Participant (75) stated that *“....People should find themselves a shelter, a little break. People should be able to focus on their emotions and feelings, find some alone time at home, find friends to express themselves. These friends can also be books.”* Another participant shared the importance

³⁴ Sandy J. Slater vd., “Recommendations for Keeping Parks and Green Space Accessible for Mental and Physical Health during COVID-19 and Other Pandemics”, *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 17/E59 (2020), 1-5.

of being alone and how the current pandemic allowed them to find alone time. Participant (70) stated that:

When I look at the photograph below, I see that I am spending time alone and progressing in this process. The person in the photograph is also traveling alone. I find peace when I look at the photograph. Just like I find peace when I am alone. It is not difficult for me to be alone due to the conditions we are in right now. I am glad I am not at university. When I saw this photo, "that's me!" I said. I am happy now that I chose this photo. The photo appeals to me. I feel at peace. I don't think anyone needs to do anything to make my life more meaningful. Because right now, I live the way I want.

College students are considered vulnerable to mental health concerns³⁵ and particular attention should be given to their mental wellbeing. This is especially true during the current pandemic considering the increase in the stress-producing factors and nature of online education resulting in social isolation. This is where the existing coping mechanisms of college students play a crucial role in risk reduction. The results of the current study revealed that counseling students have found ways to cope with the stress of the pandemic and developed new coping mechanisms to maintain their overall wellbeing. Overall, the facilitating factors found in this study that contributed to the overall wellbeing of counseling students are mentioned in the existing literature as stress-reduction techniques. The main themes found in this study are also consistent with recent research conducted with college students during the pandemic.³⁶ Findings of the current study supported the notion that learning new things, being hopeful for the

³⁵ Changwon Son vd., "Effects of COVID-19 on College Students' Mental Health in the United States: Interview Survey Study", *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22/9 (2020), 1-14.

³⁶ Xinli Chi vd., "[Prevalence and Psychosocial Correlates of Mental Health Outcomes among Chinese College Students during the Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)", *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 11 (2020), 1-9; Orsolya Király vd., "Preventing Problematic Internet Use during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Consensus Guidance", *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 152180 (2020), 1-4; Son vd., "Effects of COVID-19 on College Students' Mental Health in the United States: Interview Survey Study", 1-14; Xiaomei Wang vd., "Investigating Mental Health of US College Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-Sectional Survey Study", *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 22/9 (2020), 1-11.



future, staying connected with classes during online education³⁷; finding meaning in life, spirituality, being productive, being mindful³⁸; and being motivated³⁹; having financial resources, and time management skills⁴⁰ facilitated the overall wellbeing of counseling students during the pandemic.

Discussion of the most important barrier/concerns

The results of our study led to the identification of fourteen barrier themes respectively: restriction of freedom (%29, n=28), psychosocial and spiritual issues (%20, n=20), not being able get together (%19, n=19), psychopathologic issues ((%17, n=17), financial problems (%12, n=12), problems of online education/ distance learning (%11, n=11), being away from nature (%11, n=11), being afraid of effects of corona (%10, n=10), biological problems (%8, n=8), not being able to do counseling practices (%7, n=7), having communication problems with family members (%6, n=6), not being mindful (%4, n=4), selfish behaviors of people (%2, n=2) and other (being health professional, negative effects of media) (%3, n=3).

The review of the main barrier themes determined in the study that salient themes in making counseling students' life difficult during COVID-19 were loss of freedom, psychosocial and spiritual issues (feeling hopeless, desperate, weak, bored, lonely, ambiguity, darkness, pessimistic), physically staying away from loved ones, psychopathologic issues, and financial problems respectively. Benke et. al.⁴¹ stated that during the pandemic caused by COVID-19, individuals experienced more loneliness, high levels of psycho-social stress and less enjoyment in their life when there were high levels of restrictions of freedom in their lives. In other words, the inability to go outside and staying at home during the pandemic process has led to some negative

³⁷ Son vd., "Effects of COVID-19 on College Students' Mental Health in the United States: Interview Survey Study", 1-14.

³⁸ Wang vd., "Investigating Mental Health of US College Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-Sectional Survey Study", 1-11.

³⁹ İbrahim Doyumğaç vd., "Understanding the Most Important Facilitators and Barriers for Online Education during COVID-19 through Online Photovoice Methodology", *International Journal of Higher Education* 10/1 (2021), 166-190.

⁴⁰ Tanhan - Strack, "Online Photovoice to Explore and Advocate for Muslim Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Issues: Ecological Systems Theory and Ally Development".

⁴¹ Christoph Benke vd., "Lockdown, Quarantine Measures, and Social Distancing: Associations with Depression, Anxiety and Distress at the Beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic among Adults from Germany", *Psychiatry Research* 293 (2020).

psychological consequences such as increased loneliness, decreased social support, depression, and anxiety.⁴² During the pandemic period, some individuals felt as if their freedom was taken away due to the curfews. For example, participant (78) mentioned that:

The most difficult part in this process was that I could not find the freedom to act freely as I wanted, as in my previous periods. The photo shows the difference between the free me before the pandemic and the trapped me at home during the pandemic. There were times when I felt as if I was trapped in the house during the pandemic, like a bird caged in the photo.

During this pandemic, the decision to stay at home was made so that physical health could be protected through isolation but, this decision also has negative psychological effects; for example, participant (79) stated that: *“I was forced to stay in a limited indoor space when I was able to roam freely in large spacious areas, especially after a while, although the people with whom I share this closed area are valuable to me, the permanence of the people and the place started to be overwhelming, ... What makes it difficult is that I am far from the freedom and freedom I see in this photo, that I feel stuck.....”*(Figure1). The isolation people went through during the pandemic not only has psychological but also economic consequences for individuals.⁴³ Son et. al.⁴⁴, Aristovnik et. al.⁴⁵ and Kapasia et. al.⁴⁶ highlighted that university students were concerned about their future with ever-deepening financial problems due to coronavirus pandemic. For instance, participant (3) mentioned that *“I cannot talk about this topic*

⁴² Matthew T. Tull vd., “Psychological Outcomes Associated with Stay-at-Home Orders and the Perceived Impact of COVID-19 on Daily Life”, *Psychiatry Research* 113098 (2020); Wang vd., “Investigating Mental Health of US College Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-Sectional Survey Study”, 1-11.

⁴³ Yasemin Bozkurt vd., “COVID-19 Pandemisi: Psikolojik Etkileri ve Terapötik Müdahaleler”, *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Covid19-Özel Ek* 19/37 (2020), 304-318.

⁴⁴ Son vd., “Effects of COVID-19 on College Students’ Mental Health in the United States: Interview Survey Study”, 1-14.

⁴⁵ Aleksander Aristovnik vd., “Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Life of Higher Education Students: A Global Perspective”, *Sustainability* 12/20 8438 (2020).

⁴⁶ Nanigopal Kapasia vd., “Impact of Lockdown on Learning Status of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students during COVID-19 Pandemic in West Bengal, India”, *Children and Youth Services Review* 105194 (2020).



without mentioning education, economy, etc. when the disease that surrounds the world affects our social life in a normal way in these days.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about many uncertainties (darkness, ambiguity) in the lives of individuals, and uncertainty also negatively affects the general well-being of university students.⁴⁷ When individuals perceive these uncertain situations as threatening, it may increase stress and anxiety level and cause negative psychological consequences⁴⁸. Participant (18) stated that *“In the photo, the man is going down a road, but there is a big question mark at the end of the road, so he doesn't know where to go...”* and participant (20) stated that:

I see uncertainty in the photo. It is difficult to just sit at home and wait. The situation in this picture now seems to be a global problem of the whole world. As Karen Horney said, uncertainties scare people. Looking at the photo, it feels as if I will go through this process for years.

This pandemic process is called a situational crisis because it is unpredictable, sudden, and uncontrollable, and individuals need social support to overcome this situation in these crisis periods. Because social support system is one of the essential tools in dealing with stressful life incidents and it directly affects positively individuals' well-being and health. Counseling students (26%, n = 33 out of 127) as the participants reported that physically staying away from loved ones especially friends or family was the most critical concerning factor during the outbreak.⁴⁹ For instance, participants (2) emphasized that *“Social environments are the environments where we establish relationships with people and spend time in the form of dialogues and add value to each other. For this reason, getting away from sociality has been a difficult factor for me.”*,

⁴⁷ Nadia B. Elsharkawy - Enes M. Abdelaziz, “Levels of Fear and Uncertainty Regarding the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) among University Students”, *Perspect Psychiatr Care* 19/37 (2020), 1-9.

⁴⁸ Figen Kasapođlu, “COVID-19 Salgını S¼recinde Kaygı ile Maneviyat, Psikolojik Sađlamlık ve Belirsizliđe Tahamm¼ls¼zl¼k Arasındaki İliřkilerin İncelenmesi”, *Electronic Turkish Studies* 15/4 (2020), 599-614.

⁴⁹ Tanhan, “COVID-19 S¼recinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluř D¼zeyini Ele Almak: OSF'nin T¼rkçe'ye Uyarlanması”, 1029-1086.

participant (7) stated that “*It's sad to stay away from my friends in this process. When I was with them, I found everything I did to be meaningful.*” and participant (50) stated that “*It is very boring to be away from my friends in this process.*”

14. LIMITATIONS

We had a few important limitations including conducting the study fully online, having only counseling students as the participants, not being able to advocate the results as much as the previous researchers (e.g., Tanhan, 2020; Tanhan & Strack, 2020) did and suggested, having a limited time to conduct the study, and being the first OPV study with less than 100 participants.

15. IMPLICATIONS

Considering the results of the study, we can provide recommendations for implications mainly in four areas (e.g., research, mental health professionals, education, social advocacy).

Implications for Future Research

As a measurement tool allowing researchers to understand the unique perspective of participants, researchers can consider using OPV with different populations. In this study, our participants comprised of counseling students. In future studies, researchers can use OPV to collect data from college students studying at different departments, therefore, we can understand if coping mechanisms and barriers of college students vary based on their major. For instance, previous studies pointed out medical students to have higher psychological distress and poorer psychological well-being compared to their age-matched peers and general population.⁵⁰ In this regard, comparing medical students' experiences during COVID-19 with other students can give us specific information about their unique facilitators and barriers (if any). Additionally, researchers can focus on children and especially minority groups since minority groups face even more serious issues in difficult times and contexts.⁵¹ For

⁵⁰ Daniel Pagnin - Valéria de Queiroz, “Comparison of Quality of Life between Medical Students and Young General Populations”, *Education for Health* 28/3 (2015), 209-212.

⁵¹ Mehmet Gultekin - May Laura, “Children’s Literature as Fun-House Mirrors, Blind Spots, and Curtains”, *The Reading Teacher* 73/5 (2020), 627-635; Tanhan, “COVID-19 Sürecinde Online Seslifoto (OSF) ile Biyopsikososyal Manevi ve Ekonomik Meseleleri ve Genel İyi Oluş Düzeyini Ele Almak: OSF’nin Türkçeye Uyarlanması”, 1029-1086; Ahmet Tanhan - Vincent T. Francisco, “Muslims and Mental Health Concerns: A Social Ecological Model Perspective”, *Journal of Community Psychology* 47/4 (2019), 964-978.



example, some researchers recently used OPV to understand close relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵² OPC can be used to understand well-being and the factors affecting wellbeing as precious researchers used different quantitative methods.⁵³

When we conducted this research, universities had online education due to COVID-19 outbreak. Even if the pandemic continues, universities can begin face-to-face or hybrid education. In those cases, students' facilitators and barriers could change, so OPV studies could be used to understand the college students' experiences in these circumstances and investigate how they change compared to online education.

Implications for Mental Health Professionals

Our study revealed many factors affecting college students' mental health in both positive and negative ways during COVID-19 outbreak. Inspiring from these findings, mental health professionals (e.g., university counseling center staff) can develop sensitive prevention and intervention programs to improve students' mental health.⁵⁴ Previous researchers conducted quasi-experimental studies showing counseling services to enhance mental health with college students.⁵⁵ Mental health providers can encourage students to increase their psychological flexibility⁵⁶, social support resources (e.g., family), and address possible interpersonal relationship problems as well as communication problems at the same time, as that kind of problems can emerge due to living with family as our participants mentioned. Our findings revealed that whereas being hopeful for future, spending time with hobbies like photography and music and being mindful have positive influence on the well-being of students, hopelessness and not being able to be mindful have negative influence on their psychological well-being. In this regard, mental health professionals can use positive psychology practices such as

⁵² Emel Genc vd., "Exploring the Facilitators and Barriers to Intimate Relationships during COVID-19 through Online Photovoice Methodology", *Manuscript under review* (2021).

⁵³ Ramazan Demir vd., "Yaşam Kalitesinin Yordayıcıları Olarak Psikolojik İyi Oluş ve Yaşam Doyumu", *Yaşadıkça Eğitim* 35/1 (2021), 192-206.

⁵⁴ Serkan Denizli vd., "Psikolojik Danışma Süreç ve Sonuç Arařtırmalarında Danışana İlişkin Bir Değişken: Psikolojik Zihinlilik", *Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 40 (2016), 419-431.

⁵⁵ Ahmet Tanhan vd., "The Effect of Counseling on Anxiety Level from the Perspective of Ecological Systems Theory: A Quasi-experimental Pre-test - Post-test Control Group Study", *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies* 7/3 (2020), 58-69.

⁵⁶ Ahmet Tanhan, "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with Ecological Systems Theory: Addressing Muslim Mental Health Issues and Wellbeing", *Journal of Positive Psychology and Wellbeing* 3/2 (2019), 197-219.

mindfulness to improve students' psychological mental health. In addition, it seems that seeing the pandemic process as an opportunity to focus on self, to discover and learn new things, and to be productive is an important facilitator for students' mental health. Therefore, mental health professionals can help students take a relatively optimistic perspective to see those opportunities despite several barriers such as fear of COVID-19, restriction of freedom, and physical isolation. Lastly, students should be reminded that physical isolation does not mean social isolation. That is, even though it is not possible to be physically together with our loved ones, we can still maintain our communication via technological devices. In this way, we can use the most important facilitator, social support, for our mental health.

Implications for Education

Our participants mentioned that online education can be both a facilitator and a barrier for their mental health. As a way of enhancement of belongingness to school and a tool of learning, education has positive influence on students. At this point, the most remarkable facilitative factor can be the support of instructors during online education. An important part of future counselors is supervision and providing contextually sensitive supervision.⁵⁷ Providing online supervision can be an important part of supporting counselors-in-training. In this context, academic staff and instructors seem to be key people for their students. Considering the fact that pandemic presents several difficulties for the biopsychosocial and spiritual well-being of the students, academic staff can interact in a more understanding and sympathetic manner, therefore, they can help their students to cope in the pandemic process more effectively.

Implications for Active Interdisciplinary Social Advocacy

In this study, we used OPV based on EST and CBPR, which takes a contextual and comprehensive approach to the topics of interest. Thus, findings of this study could be used for social advocacy as EST and CBPR aim to convey the findings of the study to the responsible institutions and authorities. It seems that the most noticeable finding

⁵⁷ Burcu Pamukçu - Dilek Yelda Kağnıcı, "Turkish Counselor Trainees' Experiences Regarding Experiential Groups: A Qualitative Study", *Journal of Human Sciences* 14/1 (2017), 560-570; Ahmet Tanhan, "Beginning Counsellors' Supervision in Counseling and Challenges They Experience: Based on Developmental Models", *Adiyaman Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* 8/1 (2018), 49-71.



that can be used for social advocacy is the financial problems, the fifth most frequent barrier for well-being mentioned by college students.

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¹ Ahmet TANHAN

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4972-8591

MS, PhD (Corresponding Author), Economic and Social Research Center – ESAM (Ankara, Turkey), Department of Counseling at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (North Carolina, USA) and Adiyaman University (Adiyaman, Turkey); Institute for Muslim Mental Health (Michigan, USA); Association for Contextual Behavioral Sciences, Turkey Chapter (Istanbul, Turkey). ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4972-8591>, tanhanahmet3@gmail.com

² Gökmen ARSLAN

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9427-1554

PhD, Counselor, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Department of Counseling, Burdur, Turkey, ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9427-1554>, gkmnarslan@gmail.com

³ K. Fatih YAVUZ

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3862-2705

MD, psychiatrist, Istanbul Medipol University, Department of Psychology and Association for Contextual Behavioral Sciences, Turkey Chapter (Istanbul, Turkey). ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3862-2705>, kfatihyavuz@yahoo.com

⁴ J. Scott YOUNG

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7782-9181

PhD, Counselor, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC Greensboro), Greensboro, NC, USA. Department of Counseling, jsyoung3@uncg.edu

⁵ İlhan ÇİÇEK

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0266-8656

PhD, Counselor, Batman University, Department of Educational Sciences, Batman, Turkey, ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0266-8656>, cicekilhan7272@gmail.com

⁶ Mehmet Nurullah AKKURT

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2418-0395

PhD, Counselor, Ege University, Department of Counseling, Mehmet.nurullah.akkurt@ege.edu.tr

⁷ İhsan Çağatay ULUS

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9610-4562

PhD, Counselor, Department of Counseling, Bartın University, iulus@bartin.edu.tr

⁸ Ebru Talibe GÖRÜNMEK

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4412-1448

MS, Counselor, Istanbul University- Cerrahpaşa, Department of Counseling, ebrugor58@gmail.com

⁹ Ramazan DEMİR

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3864-558X

PhD Student, Counselor, Department of Counseling, Gaziantep University, rdemir3303@gmail.com

¹⁰ Fatma KÜRKER

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0408-1963

MS, Counselor, Necmettin Erbakan University and Adiyaman University, Department of Counseling, fatmakurker@adiyaman.edu.tr

¹¹ Cihat ÇELİK

PhD Student, Psychologist, Istanbul University, Department of Psychology and Department of Counseling at Adiyaman University, ccelik@adiyaman.edu.tr

¹² Mehmet Şirin AKÇA

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1292-6321

MS, PhD Student; Counselor, Çukurova University, Department of Counseling, mhmt_47@hotmail.com

¹³ Büşra ÜNVERDİ

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8268-5140

PhD Student, Counselor Department of Counseling, Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, bunverdi@29mayis.edu.tr

¹⁴ **Hamza ERTÜRK**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0028-7473

MS, PhD Student, Psychologist, Economic and Social Research Center (ESAM, Ankara, Turkey); Department of Psychology at Istanbul Medeniyet University and Fatih Sultan Mehmet University, erturkhamza@gmail.com

¹⁵ **Kelly-ann ALLEN**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6813-0034

PhD, Psychologist, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia
The Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Australia <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6813-0034>
kelly-ann.allen@monash.edu

* We have ordered the names randomly and all authors contributed equally to the conduct of the study and preparation of the manuscript. The authors agreed on the order and on all other processes related to the submission of the manuscript and declare no conflicts of interest. As the authors we did not have any external funding for the manuscript.

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