

DIGITAL INEQUALITY PROBLEMS OF THE DISABLED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN TURKEY

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Abstract

With the Covid-19 Pandemic, which deeply affects the whole World, the increase in digital inequalities that have become more visible and even turned out a new obstacle itself is the starting point of this research. In this context, the main problem of the research is that with the Covid-19 Pandemic, digital inequalities have become a new field in the struggle with the difficulties experienced by disabled people. The main purpose of this study is to reveal that the experiences of some professional basketball players with disabilities in the Pandemic process mean for them along with digital inequality. In this research based on Grounded Theory methodology, selective coding was done after open and axial coding. In the selective coding phase of the study, based on the statements of the participants, it was decided that the core concept was 'accessibility'. Because it has been observed that individuals with disabilities have limited access to both social and digital life, so their life experiences gradually separate from the society and lead to their isolation. As the last stage of the Grounded Theory, the disabled are narrated through the sailing ship, the pandemic wind and digitalization through the sea metaphor.

Keywords: Disability, digital inequality, accessibility, Grounded Theory, Turkey

1. Introduction

Disability is a relatively neglected new field in sociology literature as well as in social life. This field has been developed by a small number of eminent scientists since the late 1970s (Albrecht 1976; Finkelstein 1980, 1998; Tomlinson 1982, 1995; Oliver 1981, 1983, 1990; Barnes 1990, 1991, 2003; Davis 1995, 1997, 2006; Shakespeare 1998; Albrecht et al., 2001; Barton, 1993, 1996). Early studies in the sociology of disability were concerned with the causes and nature of disability. Afterwards, an individual, social and material framework was tried to be drawn (Allan, 2010).

The literature on disability often deals with the issue at the macro level. The most important question, the socioeconomic level of the disabled, where they live and whether they are included in the labor market is often overlooked. In this study, interviews were conducted with disabled basketball players. Contrary to the inadequacy of the macro perspective of previous studies, the athletes examined in our study were handled at a rather micro level.

Being a Paralympic male athlete is their common trait. Since there are differences in their age and socioeconomic status, the analyzes required a comparison on these characteristics of the athletes. Because the difficulties experienced by the participants in the pandemic according to their socioeconomic levels differ even for such a small sample group. At the same time, these difficulties shape the perceptions and views of disabled people about the pandemic, the world and the sport they have done.

According to the World Health Organization, disability is defined as the limitation or absence of the ability to perform an activity in a style or line that is considered normal for a person. In an article published by WHO (World Health Organization) in 1980, basic concepts related to disability were also defined. As expected, these definitions give greater priority to the health dimension of disability.

There are three different definitions developed in the paper (World Health Organization, 2001);

Impairment: It refers to the loss of physiological, psychological or anatomical (especially at the level of organ activities) structure or deviation from what is defined as normal.

Disability: This refers to the loss of physical and mental abilities. It is the decrease or loss of a skill compared to normal.

Handicap: It is the inability to fulfill the life requirements that are considered normal according to the age, gender, social and cultural level of the person due to Impairment and Disability states.

The definition of disability is also made in the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) attached to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. Accordingly, those who cannot do the things that they need to do on their own in their personal or social life (congenital or acquired) are disabled.

According to the expression defined in paragraph c of Article 3 of the Social Services and Child Protection Law No. 2828 (Social Services Law, 1983) in Turkey, a disabled person is a physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social disability as a result of any disease or accident, congenital or acquired. He is a person who cannot comply with the requirements of normal life due to the loss of his abilities in various degrees, and who needs protection, care, rehabilitation, counseling and support services.

As long as it is considered only as a deficiency or dysfunction in the body, disability remained in the field of view and intervention of medicine. The inability of disabled individuals to benefit from opportunities such as education and employment has also been understood as a natural and even inevitable result of this situation.

Undoubtedly, individuals may lose their physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social abilities to varying degrees as a result of their birth or as a result of a number of diseases or accidents that occur later. This situation, on the other hand, can make people's social lives difficult as well as preventing them from performing their vital actions in their lives.

In the Disabled and Elderly Statistical Bulletin (2020) published by the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services of the Republic of Turkey, there are 2 million 535 thousand 533 people registered in the National Disability Data System in Turkey. Of this disabled population, 1 million 425 thousand 667 are male and 1 million 109 thousand 466 are female.

This number is actually limited to people who have applied to hospitals that are authorized to receive a "Health Board Report for the Disabled". Participants in the study are also included in this number.

In our study, on the other hand, the theoretical definitions of disability, which have changed over the years, were primarily examined, since the above-mentioned definitions are biologically and physiologically oriented and ignore the social dimension.

It is clear that the concept of disability is defined in many different ways, leading to a confusion regarding the definition of identity. Unfortunately, this confusion can even go beyond discussing the problems of the disabled (Burcu, 2018).

In addition to the low visibility of disabled people in the society, it can be said that the current conceptual confusion has caused this field to be ignored by sociologists. With the section on disability and society created by the American Sociological Association (ASA) in 2010, it was possible to address disability in a non-medical and biological framework (Barnartt, 2017: 285). Undoubtedly, sociological studies have been carried out in this field, albeit to a lesser extent. For example, the publication of Berger and Luckmann's (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality* has had a significant impact on the sociological study of disability.

With this effect, changes in the definition of disability have emerged with social changes and developments in social sciences. Theoretically, disability has been tried to be explained with various models. Mackelprang and Salsgiver (1999) divided these models into three groups as Moral Model, Medical Model and Social Model. In order to see the changing perception and conceptualization of disability, these three models can be summarized as follows:

- a) **Moral model:** It is the oldest model and associates disability with being sinful or having a bad character. It remained the dominant view until the end of the Middle Ages.
- b) **Medical Model:** It considers all disabled and disabled individuals as a result of physiological disorders caused by reasons such as illness and accident and is based on the assumption that all disabled individuals are "constricted" beings.
- c) **Social Model:** It argues that disability is socially constructed and imposed on people. It emerged as a reaction to the Medical Model.

The philosophical ontology of the social model is actually important in expressing the meaning we want to give when using the concept of disability in our study. Because from the perspectives of disability studies, the social model largely rejects essentialist views (Watson and Vehmas, 2019: 349). From this point of view, when it comes to the physical or mental structure of the beings, whatever is considered as human or normal depends on the culturally produced norms, not on the nature and essence of the human being. Humanity and normality are socially constructed things. From this point of view, bodies are social as well as cultural entities as well as biological

entities. The reasons behind the disabled body are therefore a social and cultural phenomenon as well as biological (Paterson and Hughes, 1999: 600).

2. Theoretical Framework

The basic concepts of this article are briefly discussed below as Informatics, Information age, digital inequalities and Actor Network Theory (ANT).

Informatics and Information Age

Hersh (2009) defines informatics as a discipline that focuses on the acquisition, storage, and use of knowledge in a particular environment or field. Information technology is more about information than technology. In fact, although technology is important, it is the use of knowledge as a tool to get the most out of it. Friedman (2009) stated that informatics is about using technology to help people do cognitive tasks better, rather than building artificial intelligence systems.

It has become an ordinary situation for us to see a new technological tool everywhere and at all times. On the other hand, it is also understandable that new economic benefits are being created and firms claiming that we are in the middle of this transition. The most famous concept symbolizing this transition is the "postindustrial society" (Bell, 1973). This period that we have arrived and even prepared to leave behind is called the "information age". Organizations, firms as well as academics have long focused on the transition to this era (Sampler, 1998).

One of the basic assumptions of neoclassical economists, 'perfect information' is actually information available to all market participants at zero cost. The purpose of the knowledge economy is to explore the links between market participants and the costs of acquiring knowledge, and to put forward studies in this direction (Stigler, 1961; Rothschild, 1973; Spence, 1973).

Some scholars have also sought to understand the importance of knowledge not from the perspective of market efficiency, but the role played by knowledge in the production process as a source of wealth creation through discovery and innovation. For example, Bell (1981) persistently argues that knowledge should now be regarded as a factor of production in its own right. Because with the beginning of the information age, information has become a vital resource.

On the other hand, the information age is also an opportunity for public health. More information is always needed to make timely, reliable public health decisions. Indeed, Public Health Informatics applications make extensive use of information technologies to serve the specific needs of public health (Friede et al., 1995).

The main point to be underlined here is that the use of technological innovations in daily life has become mandatory. Looking at the issue from a broader perspective, it can be said that the state of being natural is gradually changing. Depending on the destruction of the natural by industrial pollutants, genetic engineers have started to work on the reproduction of extinct, endangered species (Rich, 2021). According to Rich (2021), using technology to remake the world for its own good becomes second nature to humankind. In short, the problem here is no longer how we return to the world we lost, but turns into what kind of world we want to create instead.

What Rich tells us here is very similar to the 'new normal' expression we heard during the Pandemic period. It is in question that the natural, normal relations we know are replaced by the second nature, that is, the new normal, and in a sense, it is imposed. For example, sports exercises that were canceled for any reason at a time when there was no internet were actually canceled for everyone, while the possibility of doing online training with the inclusion of the internet in our lives has created a new normal. It even went further and created a difference between those who can participate in online training and those who cannot. To talk with Rich's concepts, it is possible to interpret the trainings made in the period when there is no internet as a communication technology, as natural training, and the online training done after the internet as second or new natural trainings.

Whether digital products or technology products, whose production, consumption and use have increased excessively, can provide social equality is a topic of current debate. In fact, the assumption that inequalities will be prevented with the society's access to technology is to perceive the society as homogeneous and therefore an incomplete approach. Because digitalization (just like capital) is not evenly distributed and a Digital Divide is experienced. The concept of digital divide is precisely in this sense, a concept that states that there is a difference between those who can access the latest information technologies and those who cannot (Compaine, 2001). The reality of digitalization and digital division, which has increased during the Covid-19 Pandemic process, is at a point that cannot be ignored, especially when it comes to the access of people with disabilities. Because, as stated before, this situation has created a new and another area for disabled individuals to struggle with.

Hargittai (2003) and Salinas (2003), on the other hand, added the relations of transportation, accessibility and usability to the concept of digital divide. They also paid attention to the difference between those who use technologies and those who cannot. In our study, this issue was not examined separately, since all participants had usability. However, it is clear that usability is one of the most important sources of the digital divide.

On the other hand, according to OECD (2001) sources, it is the differences between individuals, households, businesses and geographical regions at different socio-economic levels in terms of their access to information and communication technologies and internet usage possibilities that determine the digital divide. It can be said that the concept of digital divide is evaluated through the accessibility and usability of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In both issues, even from the broadest perspective, there are some fundamental differences and inequalities between countries and even geographical regions around the world. For example, considering that many African countries are far from IT and living in poverty in agriculture, the extent of inequality can be better understood.

For example, according to a study conducted by the Turkish Telecommunication Institution (2002), the gap between the developed and less developed countries regarding the use of information and communication technologies is gradually increasing. It can be said that this gap brings with it a new discussion of poverty, which is expressed as "information poverty" (Kalayci, 2013). In fact, the fact that educated individuals are good users of ICT increases their wages in the labor market and reduces the labor demand for individuals who cannot use these technologies well. From this point of view, it can be said that a new one has been added to the inequalities that may be experienced in wages. Therefore, it is a very important point to focus on which segments or classes digitalization will bring more inequality to.

It does not seem possible to solve the problems by owning ICT products. Even user practices should be evaluated within this problematic. It should be noted that possession alone is not enough to overcome this digital divide, digital poverty. At the same time, it is necessary to have the skills to use the equipment.

Another issue is how accessibility and usability rates differ or may differ according to age, gender, disability, and disadvantages. However, it can be said that in the relevant literature and reports of national and international organizations, this problem is almost never addressed. For this reason, a reductionist view that technology ownership is related to development is still dominant.

Parallel to the poverty literature, macro, liberalism, neoliberalism and capitalism-centered approaches are dominant in digital poverty. Providing access to ICT can be likened to raising incomes and wages. This will only provide equality in consumption. In fact, the important thing is to have the ability and skills to use and access information. If it is only equality in consumption, unfortunately, it will not ensure a full existence in the digital world.

In addition, although knowledge appears as an abstract concept, it is also an element of power in today's information society, as it is a means of generating material power (Akca and Kaya, 2016). Information that does not create a commodity and does not bring financial income is considered insignificant. As we enter 2021, problems in accessing ICT increase inequality between individuals even more as they prevent access to information. The importance of knowledge in production relations and in the labor market also requires equality of opportunity. When evaluated from this aspect, accessing ICT is a citizenship right. As a matter of fact, access to the internet in Finland and Canada is now among the legal citizenship rights. For this reason, issues such as digital divide and digital poverty should be addressed within social policies (Akca and Kaya, 2016). At the same time, while discussing social policy, age, disability, gender and similar issues should not be ignored. Because there are differences in the use of ICT due to many demographic reasons such as age and gender.

This digital inequality concept, which is even more visible during the pandemic process, can be better understood with The Knowledge Gap Hypothesis. Thus, it is revealed how inequality can lead to a new class division. According to Tichenor et al. (1970), as information exchange increases in ICT, individuals in higher socioeconomic classes will have faster access to information. Thus, contrary to all discussions, the knowledge gap between individuals in low socioeconomic class will not decrease, on the contrary, it will deepen and increase.

In the light of the discussions so far, the lack of being able to use ICT products and the inequality it brings seem to be expressed by Amartya Sen's Theory of Capability. As it is known, Sen (2008) deals with the concept in a way that consists of two parts: capabilities and functions.

While function represents the achievement itself, capability means the ability used to achieve this achievement. In short, our capabilities are the abilities we perform for functions. For example, when dressing is considered as a function, there is a difference between wearing whatever one finds to protect from the cold and being able to dress in accordance with aesthetic concerns or fashion. It is precisely for this reason that Sen (2008) has centered the concept of capability. In this framework, he defined poverty as being incapable or deprived (Sen, 2003). Therefore, even if they have access to digitally literate and ICT tools, it is unlikely that they will be able to achieve equality with the digitally literate segments of the society.

As a result, the issue of digital inequality could only find a place on the agenda as a mainstream with the Pandemic. Within the discussions about the new normal, it is common to think that the existing inequalities will decrease with the elimination of digital inequalities and the increase in access to ICT products. However, although the process is considered as the new normal, it still bears the reflections of the inequalities of the system. Therefore, discussions of the new normal cannot be conducted by ignoring the inequalities of the old normal. When approaching the issue from this aspect, these issues have to be handled carefully, especially in terms of disabled individuals. With the thought that the society is not homogeneous, the difficulties experienced during the pandemic

process, their experiences, perceptions and their view of the future, that is, the new normal, should be carefully considered. The point that should be emphasized here is that the issue cannot be resolved by saying that only disabled people are important. It should be considered that the pandemic experiences of the disabled individuals will be different according to their socio-economic and demographic characteristics and they should be handled separately. Because there will not be a single type of society design, it is neither possible nor appropriate to talk about a single type of disabled person.

Relational Sociology and ANT

Today, dualisms such as structure and individual, fact and value, mind and body, society and nature, in short, dualisms are criticized by relational sociologists for many reasons. This is why Sayer's (1997) claim that these dualities are constructed as much as they create a "second nature" gains importance.

The assumption that disability is socially constituted makes it possible to examine it as an actor at the same time. At this point, Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory gains importance. Latour (1990; 2000) used the concept of hybrid to overcome such dualities. Latour (1993) claimed that both natural and structural (industrial society) and cultural (consumption culture) factors combined hybirdly lead to the reasons behind the depletion of the ozone layer due to global warming. Similar to this example, these new disparities, or in other words, digital barriers, emerging in the process called the "New Normal", have to be evaluated together with three factors as natural, social and cultural. It would not be wrong to say that the opposite thought is a barrier in front of the full understanding of the structure of disability.

According to ANT, people, objects and places are in close relationship with each other and are produced by these proximity relationships. Another important concept for our study among the definitions of Latour (2005) is "actant". Almost anything humanal and non-humanal (technology, science, information, deseases, some official documents etc.) capable of self-circulation can be actant. This means a relatively stable and at the same time heterogeneous network of relations between humanal and non-humanal (Kasapoglu, 2008; Kasapoglu, 2020). While actors define a unique and single entity, actor-relation networks mean a group of actors (Demir, 2018).

Information circulating in almost all technologies such as the Internet is defined as "actant" (Kasapoglu, 2008). For example, the information on any website is in circulation, and just like in word-of-mouth, it changes, diversifies, and takes different forms while in circulation. At this point, the information transmitted by word -of mouth- cannot be expressed only as an object. It acts like an "actor" and is transitive, mutually influencing itself as information and the person transmitting the information. Just as an actor or individual commits suicide, it is possible for an information to self-destruct. In fact, considering the Coronavirus itself as an "actant", it needs to use the human body and living organisms for its own existence and reproduction. However, it can be said that when it puts an end to the lives of the weak bodies it is infected with, it is also preparing its own end in a dialectical manner.

As a result of all these mentioned, when information loses its accessibility in the digital environment, it also destroys its own circulation in digital literacy and accessibility to technology. In this respect, to say that digital inequality can lead to social, economic (class) inequality means that people who have been physically or socially handicapped face a new "disparity" this time.

3. Research Design and Analysis

Research Problem: People often encounter obstacles for many reasons such as physiological, social and psychological. When individuals are seen as deficient by the society they live in, they fall outside their normal definitions. Afterwards, individuals labeled as disabled are exposed to inequalities in various ways. Access to technology has brought a new obstacle along with increasing digitalization and a new technological development almost every minute. The main problem of the research is that digital inequality, which has become more visible with the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic, and that this inequality has become more evident both at the society level in general and in particular for the disabled, and has become a new handicap.

Research Objectives: As just a part of a larger planned and realized project (Isik, 2020; Isik and Kasapoglu, 2021), this article tries to find answers the following questions as sub-problems in order to understand the rapid change in digitalization discussions for the future as well as the intense digitalization experienced during the Covid-19 Pandemic period.

- a) What are digitalization and its reflections on the disabled?
- b) What are the strategies of individuals with disabilities to cope with this situation?

Importance of Research: Although there have been many studies on digital inequality, there is hardly any sociological study in the literature that focuses on the experiences of people with disabilities. It can be said that the study is original, as it includes not only the impact of the pandemic on people with disabilities, and those who practice basketball as their professional occupation, but also their experiences and perceptions of the future.

The fact that it covers the non-human as well as the human in relational sociological terms, as well as paying attention to being reflexive rather than a one-way linear approach makes this study important. Finally, it can be said that collecting and analyzing data by conducting Grounded Theory study increases its value.

Limitations of the Study: The fact that the participants were a homogeneous group prevented some more detailed comparisons from being made. However, it can be said that this limitation of the study does not pose a significant problem in terms of focusing on the pandemic experience of a specific and special group such as male basketball players.

4. Method

The data used in this article were collected according to the principles of the Grounded Theory Methodology. It can be stated that the main purpose of grounded theory is to carry out data collection and data analysis processes together, to make induction through the data collected from the field and to develop a 'theory' as a result of data collection-analysis processes (Kasapoglu, 2015).

According to Punch (2011) grounded theory is not a theory, it is a method, approach and research strategy that aims to derive a theory by using data collected from the field. It was developed as a method for investigating complex social behavior. The researcher compares dissimilar phenomena with a perspective of learning similarities (Neuman, 2010: 93). As with other qualitative approaches, data for grounded theory can come from a variety of sources. Each of these sources can be coded in the same way as interviews or observations. These coding consist of stages called open, axial and selective, respectively (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 161).

4.1. Sample and Sampling:

In accordance with the purpose of the research, interviews were conducted with 12 people using Theoretical Sampling. The inclusion of individuals with similar characteristics, who are suitable for the theory to be constructed in the grounded theory, is in accordance with the theoretical sampling selection purpose (Creswell, 1998). It can also be said that the study is also in the category of purposive sampling (quota sampling) since the selection of appropriate participants was carried out. Accordingly, it is not possible to talk about a wider universe in which the findings of the research can be generalized.

| Participants | Age | Education | Where Participants Lives | Income (Turkish Lira) | Where Participants Stays During The Pandemic Process |
|--------------|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| P1 | 32 | LYCEUM | ANKARA/ MARRIED | 11000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P2 | 22 | UNIVERSITY STUDENT | ANKARA | - | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P3 | 22 | LYCEUM | ANKARA | 3000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P4 | 17 | LYCEUM | ANKARA | 7000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P5 | 27 | SECONDARY SCHOOL | ANKARA | 5000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P6 | 32 | SECONDARY SCHOOL | ANKARA | 7000 TL | MARDİN |
| P7 | 38 | LYCEUM | ANKARA/ MARRIED | 10000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P8 | 45 | LYCEUM | ANKARA | 12000 TL | ANKARA VILLAGE |
| P9 | 41 | LYCEUM | ANKARA/ MARRIED | 14000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P10 | 20 | UNIVERSITY STUDENT | ANKARA | 15000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P11 | 45 | PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADUATED | ANKARA/ MARRIED | 7000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |
| P12 | 24 | ASSOCIATE DEGREE | ANKARA | 7000 TL | ANKARA CENTRAL DISTRICT |

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

5. Findings and Discussions

While writing the research report, the data obtained from the interviews conducted, the stages required by the grounded theory (Open Coding, Axial Coding and Selective Coding) are shown through figures.

5.1. Open Coding

During the reporting of the Grounded Theory study, all the collected data are displayed in what is called open coding.

5.1.1. First Experiences in the Pandemic Process

As it is known, the participants went out more than other disabled people because they were doing sports, and they spent their time in places such as gyms. They stated that they were affected more than other disabled people

because they could not carry out these activities due to the pandemic. It can be said that these restrictions lead to an even more severe perception of their experience due to the Pandemic.

P1: How can I say to myself, God forbid, you go to jail and do nothing, I feel like I am in such a prison life right now. Even though the training started as soon as possible, I gained some weight, I guess, due to inactivity. I say let the training begin.

P2: Let me tell you, my body melted. It affected him psychologically very negatively. He can work at home to a certain extent. It was a great disaster for the disabled, so the fire burned the place where it fell.

P5: It has finished us, we are already doing sports with physical disabilities, it has affected us more than those who have never been out. There is also the psychological aspect of it. Here it is, it's coming, it's coming, it's because Corona made us collapse psychologically because I'm going to get sick.

P9: It's over, we can't train, we don't go to the gym, this type of epidemics for the disabled and for the elderly are very demoralizing and depressing. They completely block us.

P12: Well, let me tell you, it was very bad. You work at home and it can't be as good as the gym. We used to use special tools and so on where we went, and now there is no such opportunity.

P7: I was definitely psychologically affected. There were two months in my life that I stayed in the intensive care unit, and then there is this. When I stay at home. I was most affected by it in my life. At first I did sports at home, but the limited space makes me tired of working, I quit when I registered in the leagues.

The statements of the participants show that they are suffering because they cannot work at home due to limited opportunities. Another remarkable detail is the change they experienced due to their physical inactivity, as well as the negative impact of quarantine on their psychology, as can be seen strikingly in P7's statement. The deep psychological effect of quarantine, which can be compared to the intensive care experience, is common to all participants, regardless of their socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics.

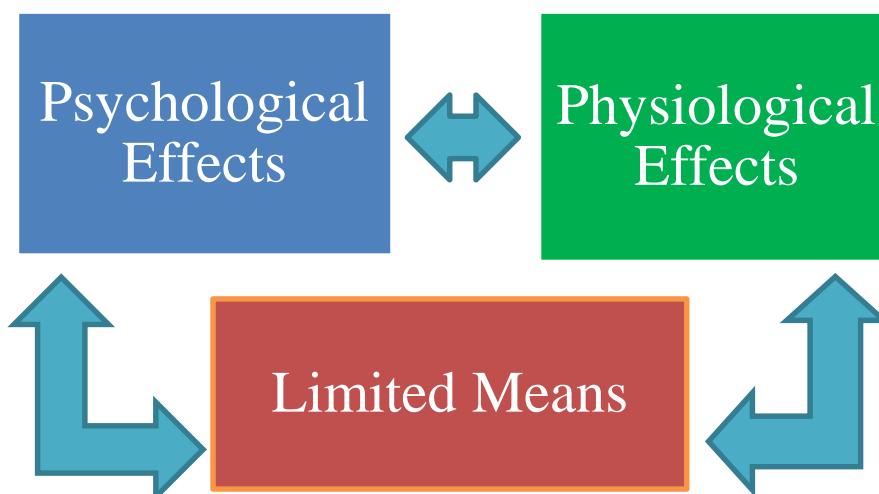


Figure 1. Personal experiences during Covid-19 Pandemic

5.1.2. Internet Access and Time Spent

According to the Household Information Technologies Usage Survey of the Turkish Statistical Institute (2019), internet use is higher in men than in women (TUIK, 2019). Since all of the participants were male, it is not possible to find or examine this difference in the study. However, in the same study, it is observed that the internet use of individuals between the ages of 16-74 is 75.3 percent (TUIK, 2019). Only 49.1 percent of the surveyed households have fixed broadband (ADSL, Fiber etc.) connections (TUIK, 2019). The regions with the lowest fixed broadband internet ownership in Turkey are the Northeast, Middle East and Southeast Anatolia regions (TUIK, 2019). Statistical data also show that gender and geographic and demographic inequalities are among the sources of digital inequality.

Among the participants, P2, P3 and P5 stated that they had problems in accessing the internet due to financial reasons, while P6 and P8 stated that the internet infrastructure was not developed and fixed broadband was not available in their region.

Access to the internet during the pandemic process in Turkey has been unequal, especially in the distance education process, due to factors such as socioeconomic status and demographic characteristics. Various studies have shown that students living in rural areas are more disadvantaged than students living in urban areas during the distance education process, which has been continuing since March 16, 2020 (Nerse, 2020; Göçmen et al., 2020).

The training of the participants is also carried out via the internet, similar to distance education. The participants were asked the question of how their access to distance training and internet usage changed during the pandemic process.

As stated above (P2, P3, P5, P8), the participants experience problems in their access to the Internet. Although they have intense problems while participating in their distance training, it is seen that the time they spend on the internet has increased as a common feature of all participants except P6.

P2: *There has definitely been an increase, Youtube, Instagram are always around, I can say music and TV series, okay, these are happening on the phone, but trainings are stuck on Zoom, there is always a problem, that is, the internet is harder than the phone because there is no high megabit.*

P3: *There has been an increase, I usually watch the past matches, I follow the process on Instagram, I talk with friends. Zoom business is troublesome. While looking at photos or something on Instagram, Zoom is tense. Since I live alone, I don't want a very high internet bill, it's more or less enough.*

P5: *So it has definitely increased, normally I used to enter for 3 hours, but now I wake up, it takes 7 hours, it is mostly about basketball, football, we talk with friends on Instagram, WhatsApp, I cannot enter every minute because there is a quota, of course, there is no quota, the price is doubled. I'm alive and I don't participate, most of them send me a message because we did this and that.*

P6: *Well, friends, I was watching the matches, there was no training, there was no phone call here. I applied to the district governor properly. I am a national athlete, set up an internet, I wrote a letter, and no one came back.*

P8: *We uploaded a lot to the Internet, for example, I had never watched a TV series in my life, I finished a TV series. So now I am in the village with my family, internet is bad of course. No matter how hard you try, it doesn't work. I had trouble at that time, let me tell you.*

The statements of P11, who is also an athlete and a coach, describe their experiences very well: Here we train with young people, so that they don't break away from sports, so they don't get lost in training, but there are people who don't have a computer, of course, they can't join. Before, at least for a couple of hours, everyone would be here, except for sickness and so on.

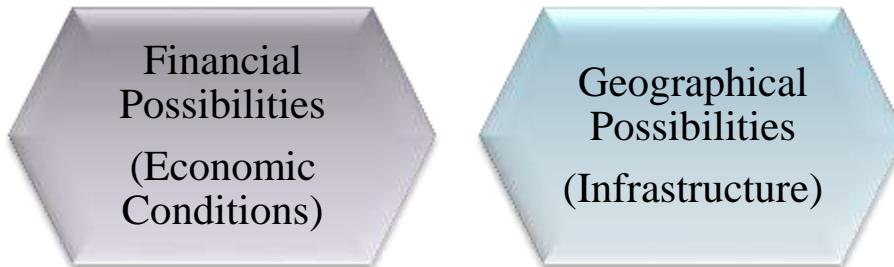


Figure 2. Internet Access Problems

Participants who say that there is no problem in their access to the Internet spend most of their time on social media platforms.

P1: *Of course, my life has increased one hundred percent, I used to browse Instagram in general, on the internet, on YouTube.*

P4: *I spend as usual. It happened because of necessity, because of Zoom, because there are online classes and training.*

P7: *I used to charge the phone once a day, now I charge it three times, so if we look at it from here, I mostly spend time on social media on the Internet.*

P10: *It has increased a bit, of course, when I am at home, I hang out on You Tube, I mostly watch game videos and basketball videos.*

According to the findings, it can be said that the same problems experienced in distance education continue in the distance sports training process. The clearest and most obvious indicator of the "digital divide" is the inability to access the Internet for socioeconomic and demographic reasons. It can be said that the difference between those who can access the training and those who cannot because they have problems will be observed clearly when sports training and matches begin.

**Figure 3.** Types of ICT activities

The findings show that the participants use Instagram for entertainment purposes, You Tube for entertainment and analysis of match videos related to their profession, and Zoom for participation in sports training for business purposes only. Based on the statements of the participants, it is understood that they try to spend time with their friends on Instagram, the platform where they spend the most time. It is possible to interpret these efforts as a behavior towards the satisfaction of their needs for face-to-face social interaction, which decreased during the pandemic process.

5.1.3. Perceptions of the Future

The answers given by the participants to the questions of what will happen after the pandemic, how the pandemic affects their lives and the future of the world can be grouped into three groups as psychological effects, financial effects, and effects on social relations. Although the participants drew attention to the importance of health and health expenditures, it was observed that they did not develop a separate discourse especially for the disabled.

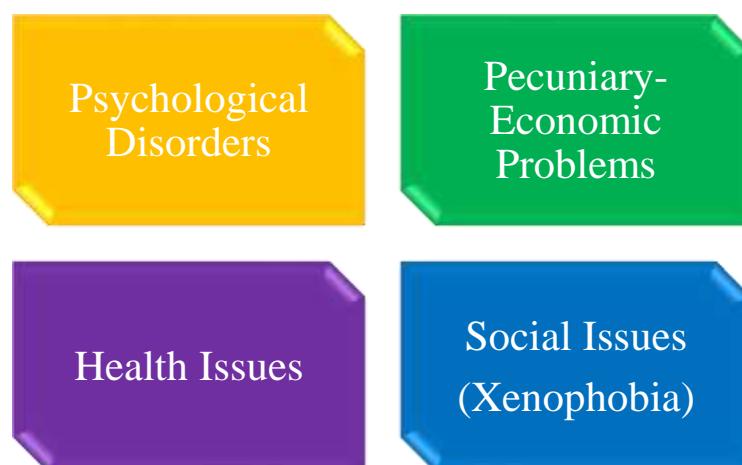
P1: *Some will not have old greetings that no one can touch. Let me hug you a lot, if the pandemic is over. I think those people are also mentally ill.*

P2: *I want to look at the empty side of the glass, it will continue as a fear in people and when this virus ends, they will go to psychologists a lot. Anxiety disorder will spread around the world. I think racism will increase.*

P5: *Difficult days await people as a means of living. After that, people realized that there was a need to invest in health. We're going to suffer the financial hardship of this problem a lot.*

P6: *I think we will have a hard time recovering after Corona. We take time until we recover, both economically and in terms of health, for example, I say that I cannot go in and sit in the old environment as before, I will not go for a while.*

P9: *Everyone will impose embargoes for their own benefit. This, I think, can cause unpleasant things between countries, fascism can cause racism. You know, in case they get sick from these immigrants and refugees. I think the new world order will be much more troublesome. Even if this virus is gone, obviously other viruses will be effective.*

**Figure 4.** Perceptions about New Normal

Less than half of the participants shared their thoughts and perceptions about how individuals with disabilities will go through the so-called 'new normal', along with their economic and health conditions.

P7: *In my opinion, if you are disabled and have financial difficulties, your aggressiveness reaches the extreme. If you do not have a regular income when you are disabled, your tendency to violence increases. You say it's because I'm disabled and direct it to him. In our country, disability means help and neediness. In other words, the Turkish equivalent of the disabled is something other than the dictionary. It means a poor person who is in need of money and does not have any money in society.*

P4: *Even if there is a vaccine, I think that it will affect us disabled people very negatively, because most of us have chronic diseases that affect our living conditions.*

P5: *We've already been living like the coronavirus for years, but this time people need to think that at home, I think they will understand how these people were enduring for years.*

P6: *In our case, the disabled are not valued enough, we are always in the background. Forget the money, he's a human too. Wouldn't you be overwhelmed if they didn't wash you for two days? There has to be a solution for these.*

P12: *No one is trying too hard. Even in small cities, there is no investment, nothing happens, they cut off the connection of the disabled with the world.*

The statements of the participants 5, 7 and 12 here are undoubtedly the most striking ones: By pairing disability with Covid-19 disease and establishing a similarity, they stated that people with disabilities are already excluded from social life and are condemned to stay at home. Looking at the issue from this aspect, it becomes understandable that with the pandemic, there are no major changes in the lives and daily routines of disabled individuals. This may be why they do not refer to their own or other disabled people's experiences.

| Effects of the Pandemic | Perception Change |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Health | Negatively |
| Psychological | Negatively |
| Economic– Financial Situation | Negatively |
| Social Issues | Negatively |
| Life of the person with disabilities | Negatively (But no big differences) |

Table 02. Covid 19 Pandemic and Perception Relationship

It is an expected situation that the participants want to return to sports because they are athletes. Apart from this, it can be said that what they observe in their daily lives, in their social environment or what they think will happen in the 'new normal' process is more about health and economy. Because the new normal has prevented them from moving, albeit limited, and has taken away their chance to practice their profession.

5.1.4. Thoughts on the Future of Their Own Professions

As mentioned above, the participants who did not have the opportunity to practice their profession with the pandemic were asked what kind of changes they expect in their own profession after the pandemic.

In general, the main finding that stands out in the answers is that financial liabilities and investments will increase. In addition, it is thought that the athletes will take care not to come into close contact individually and the federation and other authorized institutions will make changes in the rules in this direction.

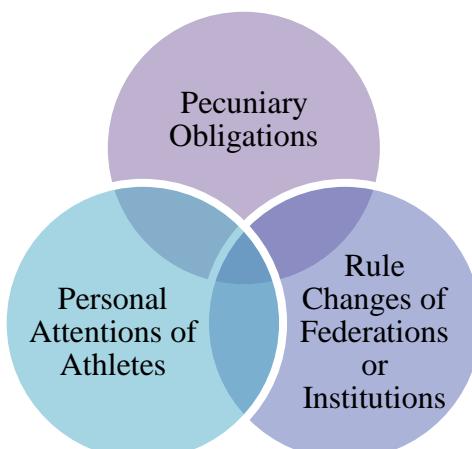


Figure 5. Thoughts about the Future of Pandemic

P1: I guess some more strict measures will be taken in our basketball. It's a handshake, I don't know what it is, they will change.

P2: In basketball, the fields, the places to be played, the materials will be more selective, the basketball players will be more selective, basketball will accelerate, I think the investments will increase more, but for now, the start of some leagues is digging one's own grave.

P4: New rules can be introduced. Since most are contact sports, it seems to me that there may be rules that require not having too much close contact with the opponent.

P7: When you foul someone who will go like this in sports, you apologize, shake hands, it seems to me that we will not do these things from now on. One-to-one struggles are also at risk, so the microbe's job becomes easier in our sports.

P11: The only thing he will change is a little more, it was self-protection in the locker room, the shower thing, there will be events such as excluding him when there is someone who sneezes. I guess that the breaks will get a little longer, they have to extend the time, I'm waiting for a rule change.

5.1.5. What the Pandemic Looks Like- Metaphor

P1: Like some companies, there may be those who knowingly spread them on people. But now it is not clear exactly what it is, but it is said that the corona is more of a man-made virus. Now wars are fought with viruses, superpowers will change them and pass them to other phases.

P3: I liken it to a political war. Someone said to the world, you know, I thought you meant to stop the world like this if I wanted to, but I can't say that this is a country.

P6: In my own opinion, this is something like chaos, like a war between countries from the bottom up.

P11: It seems that the way of war has changed, it may be that nature has punished people in a way, if you don't take care of me, I will do this to you, it may also be that I restrict you in such a way that it does not harm the animal or tree.

Some of the participants liken the pandemic to war. Others think that the pandemic emerged to punish people for their actions.

P5: The corona virus is a punishment given to us by God, when we think about the things we do against animals and little children, I see it as a virus

P10: I think that's how we sting ourselves like a scorpion, finally, he turned around and found the person, a bit like committing suicide

P2: In my opinion, this is a punishment, so cutting the branch that one trusts very much is an excellent lesson for him to see the mistakes he doesn't care about. In other words, it is something that human beings need such periods, it has to happen from time to time. So that's why people corrected themselves.

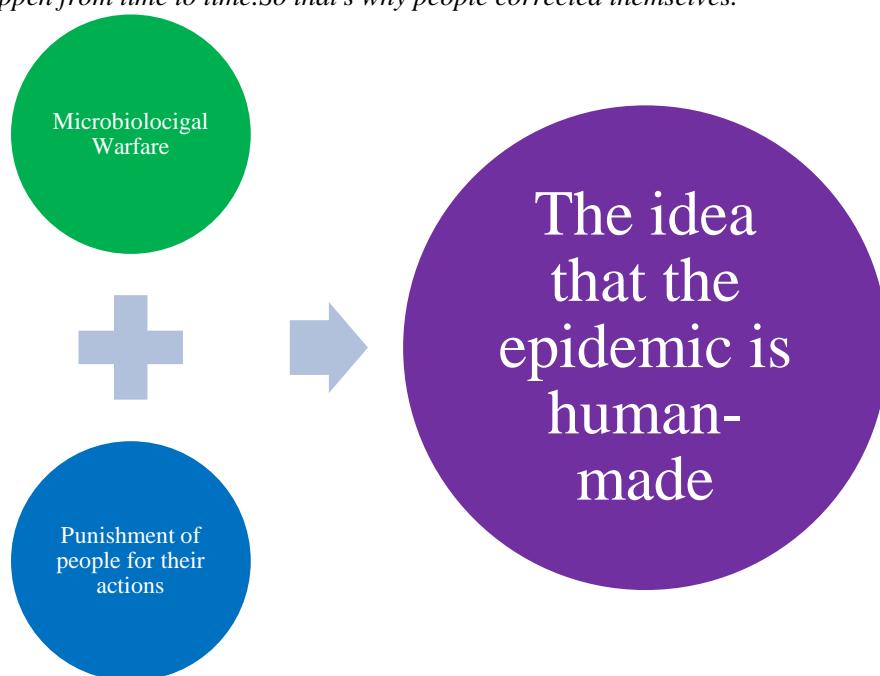


Figure 6. Metaphor about Pandemic Process

Although the participants differ on the fact that they liken the pandemic to war and think that it is due to the destruction of nature by people, as a result, they think that the coronavirus epidemic is not a natural virus, but produced by humans or caused it to happen.

5.1.6. A Perspective Against the Penetration of Artificial Intelligence in Daily Life and Professions

P3: *I think there is no need for such things. Let's let the profession of refereeing and coaching continue. That destroys its economy.*

P5: *It affects negatively once. Programmed basketball, which you call artificial intelligence today, is calculated and programmed. How much better it will be that mistakes will not occur this time and the activity will cease to be a sport, that is, out of competition. That wouldn't be a nice thing either, as the general structure of the sport. I think it also reduces one's attention to sports.*

P8: *I'm against it, it's ok for household tools and appliances, but I'm against using robots for things that require human power.*

Three participants who cannot access the internet, which can be considered as one of the most important ICT, have a negative view of the use of artificial intelligence in their profession. Other participants, who do not have a problem with their internet access, have relatively more positive views on the use of artificial intelligence.

P4: *I think it was a very logical move and it was a very good thing. Because, in all sports branches, referee mistakes are talked about a lot, I think it has made a great contribution to eliminating the question marks. Artificial intelligence also affects the coach in a very positive way. For example, I know my shortcomings, but I don't know how to work towards my shortcomings.*

P7: *The use of artificial intelligence in sports is a necessity for development, devices are connected to us, performance devices show who is slacking according to their heart rate. These are the things that improve the training and the athlete. I think that using technology will improve it more.*

P10: *I think it will be positive, especially I think it will reduce such injustices like match-fixing. Of course, it will have a great effect on training, especially for athletes like us who are in the development period at a young age, because we say do it now, for example, it will not be like an athlete in America, but if it does, maybe there will be a little more balance in that sense.*

P11: *The development of both the athlete and the coach will be comfortable, and the artificial intelligence telling him that if you do this, you will be more effective in the game, in a way, both the teacher and the player will go to a higher level.*

At this point, positive opinions gathered on the fact that the increase in the use of artificial intelligence will bring justice and equality. It is thought that it will help the development of trainers and athletes. The separation of perceptions and expectations regarding the use of artificial intelligence between the participants who have internet access and, in other words, who do not have problems in participating in distance training, and those who have problems, is an important finding, although it cannot be seen as the reason for this perception alone. Because the perceptions of the participants did not change according to age, income and education level. The difference seen is between participants with and without access to ICT. It can be said that this situation causes not only a "digital divide" but also a division regarding the use of artificial intelligence in their professions between those who have access to ICT and those who do not.

The fact that the participants who cannot access ICT care about the human factor and that artificial intelligence will destroy and damage their profession can be associated with their low level of familiarity with the digital field they do not have access to.

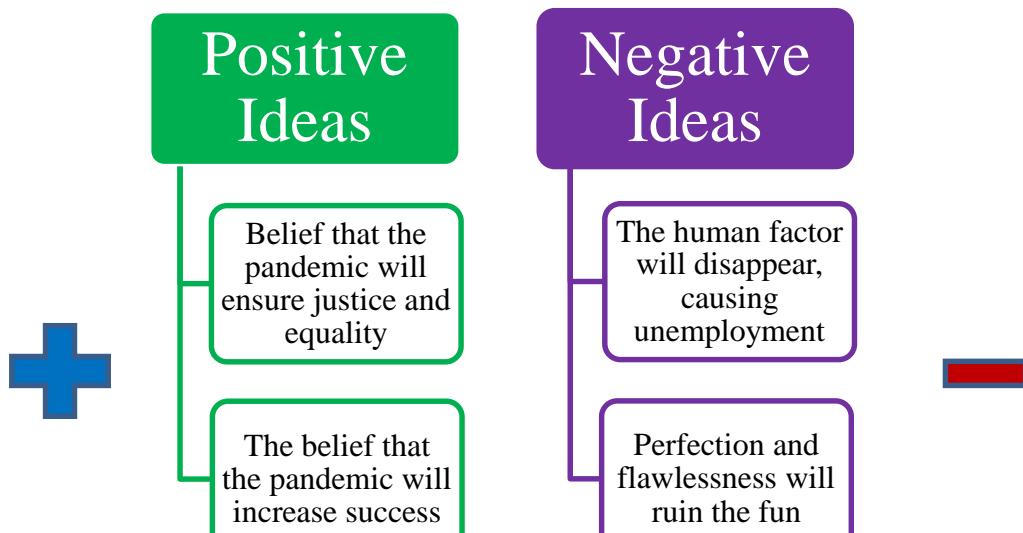


Figure 7. Difference of thoughts about artificial intelligence

5.2. Axial Coding

In line with the statements of the participants, it was tried to be shown in the axial coding process that they evaluated their experiences as materially and morally distressing processes and stated that they affected their psychology very badly. At the same time, the perceptions of the participants about the new normal vary in line with their access to the internet and thus to sports training and work. These two situations have led us to define the experience of the participants as 'New Disabling' or "New Dis-e-ability" in terms of internet access handicaps at the widest level.

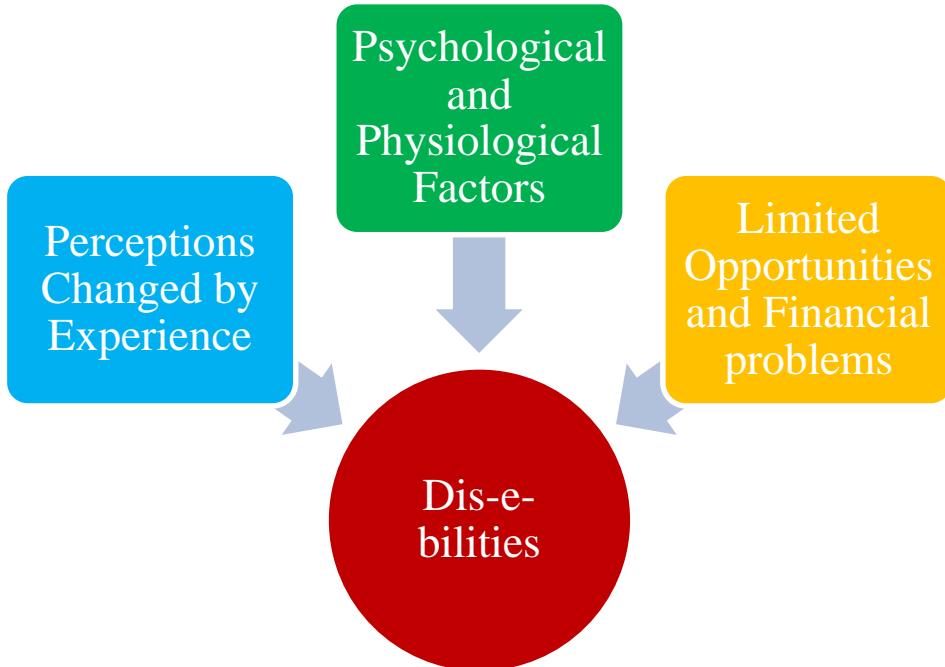


Figure 8. New Disabling or Dis-e-ability

The problem of accessing the internet for people who have to stay in their homes due to the pandemic can be evaluated within the discussion of 'information poverty'. According to Akça and Kaya (2016), the fact that knowledge is a means of generating material power in today's information society means that it is also an element of power. There is a danger of increasing inequality in terms of development between individuals who cannot participate in sports training due to their limited access to the internet and who are deprived of the information here and those who do not have access problems.

With the knowledge gap hypothesis (Tichenor et al., 1970), it is clear that individuals in high socioeconomic classes can obtain more information with the increase in information exchange within ICT products. It is always possible for disabled participants to be behind their teammates professionally, as their access to information is also blocked. Thus, from the point of view of Amartya Sen's (2008) concept of "capability", it is

possible to talk about a "new disabling" in the post-pandemic period, especially when it comes to the capabilities of Participant 6, who normally does not have internet access.

In fact, accessibility also requires the provision of some facilities for people with disabilities. Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that "States parties are responsible for ensuring the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities, without any discrimination based on disability, and for strengthening their rights and freedoms." (United Nations, 2006) This means that fundamental rights and freedoms should be reviewed on behalf of disabled people in the new normal. Otherwise, the effects of digital divide in society will be felt more deeply. Although the participants are almost a homogeneous group as men and basketball players, it is thought that the difference in perception, which varies according to their accessibility, reveals the importance of the situation sufficiently.

5.3. Selective Coding

"Accessibility" was determined as the core concept in line with what was conveyed during the selective coding stage of the study. In fact, accessibility greatly influences participants' perceptions of the new normal during the pandemic. Participant 5; As can be seen from the expression "We have been living under coronavirus conditions for years", it is understood that they have already experienced a kind of quarantine in their daily lives. Therefore, when it comes to their accessibility in social life, a general difference or division may not have arisen in the perceptions of the participants regarding the new normal.

However, participants with different internet accessibility have different perspectives on artificial intelligence and its use in their profession. Although this situation is not sufficient on its own, it shows the effect of accessing the internet.

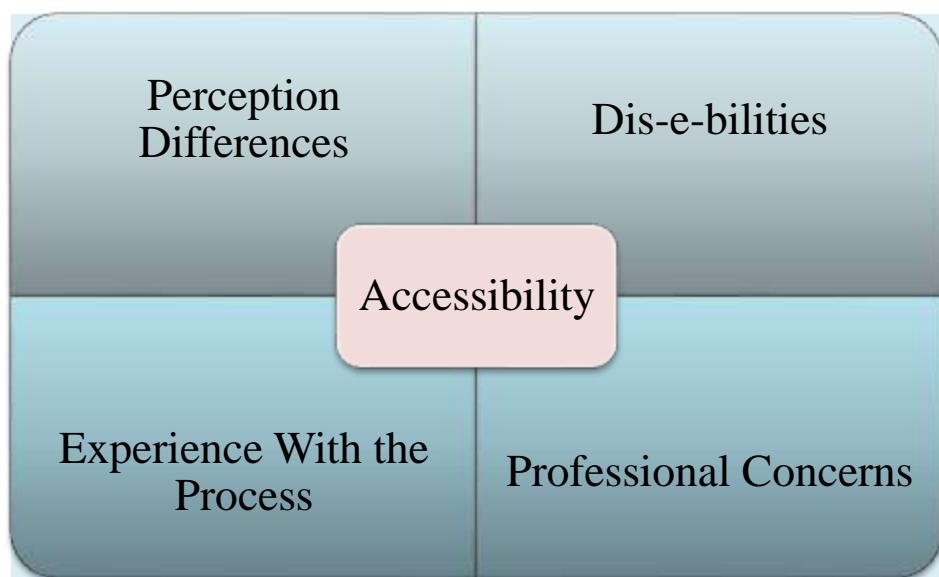


Figure 9. Accessibility

6. Conclusion

When the articles of institutions such as WHO, UN and laws related to disability are examined, it is seen that the word "normal" is the most used concept. This definition of normal also takes us to Goffman's concept of "stigma" by simultaneously pointing out those who fall outside its scope. Just like Goffman's (1963/2014) stigma is like two sides of a coin, if the stigmatized individual is mentioned, a stigmatist is also mentioned. In this context, it can be said that disabled people are also stigmatized with the perception of 'normal', which is a construction.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has brought this situation to light by questioning us again. Because, during the pandemic process, curfews covering individuals aged 65 and under 21, who have chronic diseases, have brought a new field of struggle to disabled individuals. It would not be wrong to say that the majority of disabled individuals are the individuals most affected by the quarantine process, since they have chronic illnesses.

On the other hand, the sea (water) in which the ship is floating can be thought of as digitalization itself. In other words, considering the digital information or the information available in that field, the size of this sea, that is, the size of the information, creates a "second nature" struggle area, together with the wind that the sailing ship has to deal with.

Many various factors that make up the wind can be thought to be social causes. In fact, these social reasons can also be seen as air. So much so that the air forming the wind depicts the traditional obstacles of the individuals, and the water (sea) forming the sea describes the digital obstacles. Thus, with reference to the thoughts of Thales, who claims that the first substance of the universe is water, and Anaximenes, who claims that the arches of the universe is air, the traditional form of the obstacle is the wind formed by the air. In this context, if we continue with the metaphor, the digital barrier is the sea formed by water.

In summary, the size of the wind and sea that makes the sailing ship move can cause a tsunami. Likewise, the size of the barriers and the digital divide, the digital barriers, in this sense, can lead to a kind of personal tsunami in the individuals themselves.

Participants with digital opportunities not having problems in this area can be seen as a virtual digital support, like the sailing ship in the metaphor not sinking. As a result, the accessibility problems of individuals with disabilities, regardless of whether they are natural or created by society, deserve to be handled and examined in a multifaceted and holistic manner in the so-called new normal. There is no doubt that a mixed design study enriched with comprehensive quantitative research to be carried out based on this study will be more appropriate in developing policy recommendations for dis-e-ability.

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