E-Advisory Based Analysis of Student Expressions throughout the University Courses' Registration Period on Digital Media

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Abstract

One other factor that determines university characteristics is the present students receiving education. Especially the feeling of content or the difficulty that students encounter during the registration period at the beginning of the term is strictly crucial for them. Internet based solutions have been offered rather than the other methods that students resorted to solve their problems at the university campus. Along with the 24 hour open automations system in which the advisor and students can communicate, advisors can be contacted through e-mail and social media accounts. The purpose of this study is to examine student opinions which they express to their advisors during the registration period. The study was conducted with the qualitative research method. The case study design was used in the study and data were collected with the criterion sampling method which is one of the purposeful sampling methods. The data were collected from the texts on the automation software, e-mails, Whatsapp, Facebook and the program website with the permission of students and advisors. The required permissions were received from Yıldız Technical University Institute of Social Sciences before conducting the study. Tacit consents were received from the individuals whose data were to be used in the study. The collected data were analyzed through the content analysis method by the two researchers. The data were also analyzed with the MAXQDA 11 software. The findings were sent to 15 participants via e-mail in order to receive participant confirmation. The themes for the study were "Elective and Unavailable Courses, Faulty-Deficient Course Selection, Courses, Fees and GPA". According to the results, there are fewer messages where the texts can be read by everyone and a high number of similar or same problems are expressed in conversations that take place between the advisor and the students. In addition, some students, however low in number, were observed to complain about issues that have previously been offered with explanations about what to do. Thus, it was concluded that these students did not read about the shared issues. The key roles in such technology-based courses are the expressions, attitudes and behaviors of the advisor.

Keywords: E-Advisory, University Registrations, Increasing University Quality, Social Media, Document Analysis

1. Introduction

One crucial factor that determines universities characteristics is the feedbacks of university students that they share with their environment. There may be a high number of situations that they perceive as good or bad throughout their university experience. Especially the feeling of content or the difficulty that students encounter during the registration period at the beginning of the term is strictly crucial for them. A negative experience or an error at the beginning of the term may have a negative effect on the student in the long run. When such experiences are encountered students expect their advisors to be accessible and communicable when needed and to them help when they require it (Yağcı, Çetin, Turhan, 2013). Otherwise, students can be said to prefer different options to solve their problems. In other words, it is obvious that with technological developments, the number of communication channels that people create together have increased (Koçak, 2011). Through technology and the internet, students can convey their status in these processes in a very short time. They can express their current state to the rest of the world in an instant through their social media accounts. The main reason for this can be the expansion of the use of smart phone and the internet (Karaaslan and Budak, 2012). In addition, the two main reasons for using the social media can be stated as because students express themselves better and because it facilitates communication (Öztürk and Akgün, 2012).

The attitudes that universities display when solving issues that students are curious of or regard as problems will demonstrate the quality of the university viewed partly from outside. In addition, in order to keep up with social changes, universities should be restructured with regards to their system (Karaca, 2008). The most important factor for this process is to enhance quality even more. Today, increasing university quality is on the agenda of

all the countries (Karaca, 2008). Technology should be used effectively and integrated in these processes (Mazman and Usluel, 2011). Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are essential in today's school advisory practices (Grosshandler, 2012). Also, the use of ICT in school advisory practices is increasing each day (Owen & Korkut-Owen, 2012). By keeping pace with such processes, universities have started to offer internet-based solutions rather than the other methods that students resorted to solve their problems at the university campus (Mutlu, Kip and Kayabaş, 2006). This practice can be likened to distance education. Distance education can be defined as an education model that brings together learners and instructors through digital media regardless of time and place (Bayam and Aksoy, 2002, Seven, 2012, p.2, Verduin and Clark, 1994). In addition, better service can be offered to people (ill, worker, residing in a different regions etc.) who are unable to attend to the unit they receive education (Terkeşli and Gül, 2011). Along with the 24 hour open automations system in which the advisor and students can communicate, advisors can be contacted through e-mail and social media accounts. Using such new technologies increases communication throughout academic processes (Turan and Çolakoğlu, 2008).

Technologic and internet-based solutions are offered for students to generate effective communication with their advisors. Thus, the concept of e-advisory was introduced to the education processes in universities. Advisory that takes place in environments where students can text and direct questions to the advisors 24 hours a day is called e-advisory (Mutlu, Gülen and Dinçer, 2007; Okur, Salar, Süral and Uça-Güneş, 2009; Toplu and Gökçearslan, 2012). At some point the purpose of this practice can be said as to offer the service for students who don't receive face-to-face academic consultancy or to offer the service through the internet without requiring the students to attend to the education units. E-Advisory can contribute both to the instructors and to the students. Services offered with e-advisory have positive effects on student motivation (Mutlu, Özöğüt-Erorta and Kayabaş, 2006). When students reach to the unit where education is carried out, the advisory may not be present. E-Advisory can also be offered to help students adapt to the university environment (Lacina, 2002). Overcoming adaptation problems of university students can be eased this way.

Rapid solutions should be created in order to detect the sources of the problems that students encounter and to prevent them from suffering. Online databases that reflect the internet spirit of today's world can offer convenience to advisors and students. The purpose of this study is to examine student opinions which they express to their advisors during the registration period via digital platforms. Thus, which communication channels students contact their advisors with and which issues they share can be determined. Attitudes of advisors and students towards each other can also be determined this way.

2. Method

The study was conducted with the qualitative research method. Qualitative researches enable researchers to examine an existing fact from the viewpoint of the participants (Merriam, 2009). The case study design which enables an in-depth study of a limited issue (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008) was used in the study. Research designed on single case study. Data collection sources of the study were digital documents consisting of the collected statements. Denzin (1984) states that diversity of data is necessary for case studies. Patton (2002) states that in order to enhance the quality of a study, using more than one data collection instrument can be effective. Thus, in addition to the automation system data, statements shared through e-mails, Whatsapp, Facebook and program website were used for the study. A triangulation was enabled for data diversity.

2.1 Participants

341 students and two advisors from a public university in Istanbul participated in the study. Participants were determined through criterion sampling, on of the purposeful sampling methods (Patton, 1987). Although the number of students accessing the advisors through social media was high, they were not included in the study because their statements were not related to the registration periods. Participants of the study consisted of students who shared their expressions through the automation software, e-mails, Whatsapp, Facebook and the program website during the spring and fall semesters in 2014-2015 academic period. In order to help the potential participants to take part in the study more comfortably, digital media was planned to be used for contact rather than face-to-face interviews. The potential participants were informed through data collections instruments, Whatsapp, Facebook and the program website. In the notification, it was stated in detail that participants who did not want to participate in the study could send an e-mail to a previously determined researcher In addition, the related notifications were issued on the website for 134 days. Also, explanations about the study were provided frequently and participants were provided with a written explanation informing them that they could see the study results whenever they want. Finally, the notification underlined that no statement, which directly or

indirectly indicated the participants or the department they studied in, would be included in the study. It was stated that code names rather than the real names of the participants would be used in the study. No participant gave feedbacks for the detailed notifications. Thus, tacit consents were received from the individuals whose data were to be used in the study. Tacit consents can be used to explain the purpose of the study when there are a large number of participants (Berge and Lune, 2015, p.) 92). It was observed that while the notification was issued, the program website was visited 47167 times (average 354 visits a day). The advisors were coded as A1 and A2, and the students were coded according to the initial letter and line of their setting (WS24_311, O210 etc.).

2.1 Data Collection

The required permissions were received from Yıldız Technical University Institute of Social Sciences before conducting the study. First, the messages which the students and the advisors sent to each other through the course automation software were gathered. These messages are the texts that the students sent through the course adding interface during the 2014-2015 academic period Fall (August 25-September 19) and Spring (February 9-24) terms. Each student was examined to determine whether or not they texted their advisors. Students who sent messages were determined and each message was copied according to their dates, hours, sender and contents into an area where only the researcher can access them. In addition, e-mails, Whatsapp and Facebook messages and messages on the program website that the students sent to their advisors were gathered. After gathering the data in separate files, all of the data that were collected were gathered in a single file. Showing the data and getting the participants to confirm them during the study is crucial for the study (Merriam, 2009). Thus, the data gathered together through digital media were e-mailed to eight participants, selected randomly and whose e-mails were accessed, and they were asked to confirm them and to give a feedback on the parts they want to correct, add something, explain or delete something. Two among the eight participants stated that they made very few changes (added or deleted 1-2 words or 1-2 sentences). Using the data that participants shared sincerely is a crucial factor that decreases partiality in the study. The reason for this is because while participants were sending their messages, they shared their feeling sincerely, unaware that their opinions could be used in a study.

2.1 Data Analysis

The data of the study were interpreted by conducting a content analysis. The purpose of content analyses is to reduce the words used in a study to a lower number of categories (Creswell, 2013). All of the interviews were copied to the computer. Some of the collected texts were sent to the participants for confirmation. The texts that were obtained after this process were subject to content analysis with the MAXQDA 11 software. The findings were shared with 15 participants via e-mail for confirmation. Thus, whether or not the perceptions and interpretations of the researcher concerning the data "were correct"was examined. Other analyses apart from these were determined by the two researchers and they tried to increase the validity and reliability of the analyses. "In Vivo"coding technique was used while analyzing the data. In the in vivo coding technique, participant statements are included while coding the data (Chenail, 2012). Some of the participant opinions regarding the themes are given as direct citations in the findings section. Researchers tried to present the findings as they are and refrained from presenting their own opinions throughout the process.

3. Findings

Interviews between university students and their advisors carried out through electronic channels were examined. Some information about the messages that university students shared with their advisors through digital media are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of shared messages and the sharing environment

Sharing Environment	Number of Messages (NM)	Number of Participants (NP)	NM/NP
Course automation software	1327	233	5.69
Facebook	994	24	41.4
Whatsapp	1285	7	183.57
E-mail	34	7	4.85
Program website	191	72	2.65
Total	3831	343	11.16

According to Table 1, course automation software had the highest number of messages and participants. In addition, the highest number of messages for per person was shared through personal social media accounts, namely Facebook and Whatsapp. Also, data concerning the lowest number of messages and individuals who communicated were related to the opinions shared through the e-mail accounts of the advisors.

Statement codes of the study were gathered together and the themes were created. The themes for the study were "Elective and Unavailable Courses, Faulty-Deficient Course Selection, Courses, Fees and Grade Point Average (GPA) ". Detailed analyses concerning the themes are presented in this section of the study. The relationships between the themes and codes are demonstrated with the figures. The numbers beneath the codes indicate the related code's repetition frequency in the collected data.

3.1 Elective and Unavailable Courses

The elective and unavailable courses theme, the codes of this theme and repetition frequency of the codes according to participant statements are presented in Figure 1.
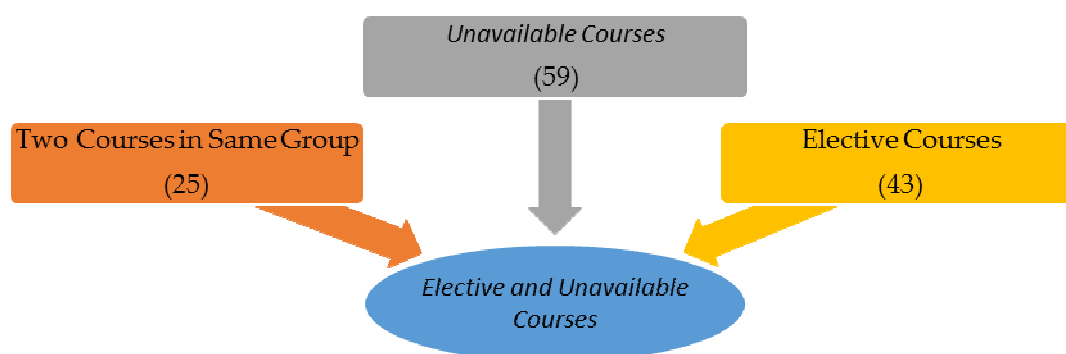

Figure 1: Data Regarding the Elective and Unavailable Courses Theme

According to participant statements expressed online, almost all of the participants stated that they have difficulty concerning the elective courses. The problem that students, who failed an elective course in the previous term and wanted to repeat the course but had a difficulty due to a quota restriction, encountered was the most outstanding problem. There were questions directed from students about which elective courses they had to choose and also feedbacks from the advisors requesting the students, who took more than one elective course from the same course group, to make corrections. Some of the participant statements regarding the theme are given below.

O211: Hello Instructor How Are You I Want To Ask You Something. I Entered University In 2009 I Froze My Registration and Now I Want to Continue. At My Time We Only Had Fine Arts an Elective Course I Passed That Course Do I Have To Take The New Elective Courses

WS42_313: Instructor we have difficulties in selecting our courses. We select the obligatory course and after we select disaster culture from group 4, physical education from group 5 and occupational ethics from group 6. It gives an error saying that those courses can't be selected together.

3.2 Faulty-Deficient Course Selection

The faulty-deficient courses theme, the codes of this theme and repetition frequency of the codes according to participant statements are presented in Figure 2.
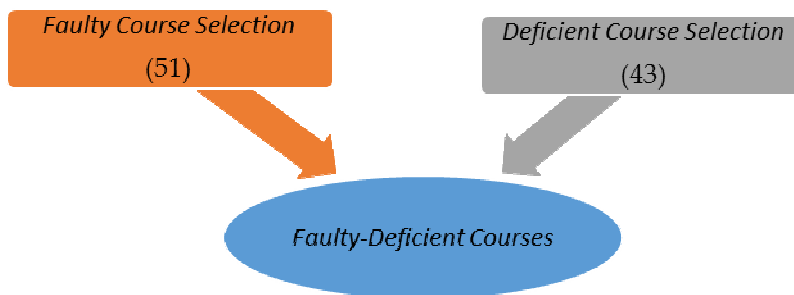
Figure 2: Data Regarding the Faulty-Deficient Course Selection Theme

According to participant statements on the five different data collection sources, there are two outstanding errors. These are; (1) selecting a course which will not be available and (2) selecting less number of courses rather than all of the courses required. It was observed that messages were sent to these students to make corrections through the course automation software and the program website. Some of the participant statements regarding the theme are given below.

A1: you need to select all the courses that write ff on your grade card. You need to select the Computer course as well. You need to take the Computer course as well. You need to take Pneumatics as well.

O92: Sir, my friends only selected Pneumatics from the 10. Course group... I selected the Computer course as well because I thought we have to select 2 courses from that group, was I right?

O181: Hello instructor. I want to cancel my Chemistry course because I took it before. I added it by looking at the courses from the website and noticed it now, I'm sorry. I'll be happy if you can correct it.

3.3 Courses

The courses theme, the codes of this theme and repetition frequency of the codes are presented in Figure 3.
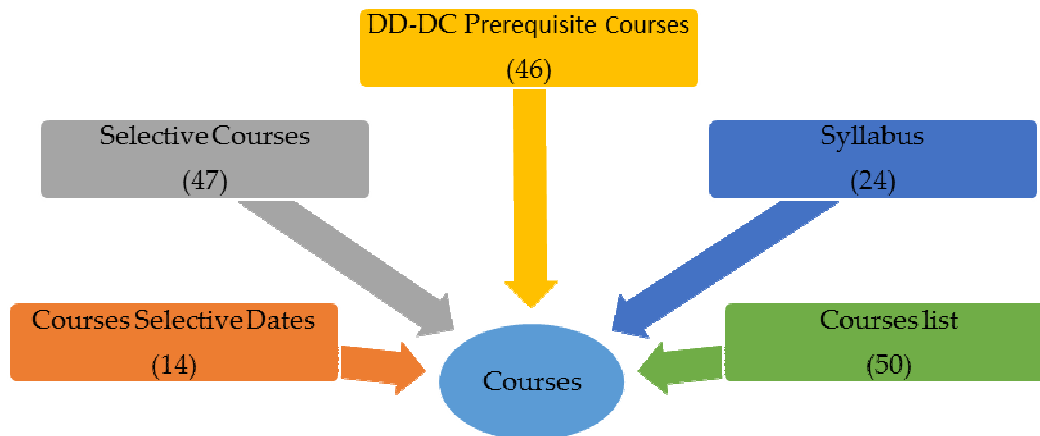

Figure 3: Data Regarding the Courses Theme

According to participant statements concerning the courses; statements about which courses are to be added and prerequisite courses are prominent. In addition, bringing the list about the added and confirmed courses to school was expressed frequently by the participants. Finally, between which dates that courses should be added and announcement of the syllabus were expressed. Some of the participant statements regarding the courses theme are given below.

WS6_277: Instructor it's giving an error on the course adding page. It says, "Adding, withdrawing and changing the course is not valid this term"can you help me?

O3: Instructor, I have 3 obligatory courses apart from these two courses, but I passed them with dd, do I have to add them again? I will be out of town so I need to complete my course program by Friday, can you help me?

M_D4_268: You don't need to add the course. The courses whose grades you can increase will appear on the

screen. It's up to you. Obligatory Turkish Language II Means: Each Student Must Take This Course. The reason why it appears on your course adding list is because: The Automation says You can take this course and increase your grade if you like. Otherwise you don't have to add it.

3.4 Fees

The fees theme, the codes of this theme and repetition frequency of the codes according to participant statements are presented in Figure 4.
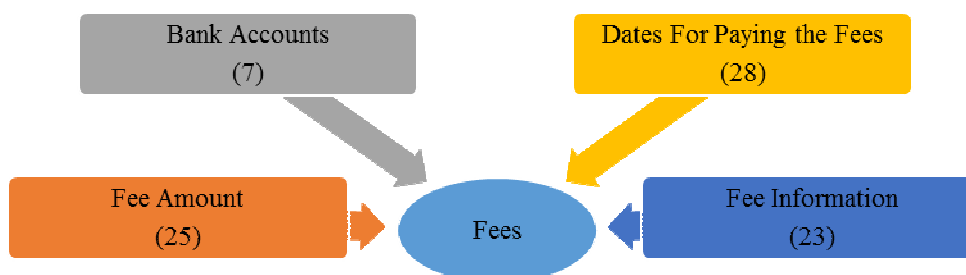

Figure 4: Data Regarding the Fees Theme

Among the statements that students who extended their school period or about evening education; the amount of fee, information about the bank accounts, during which dates the fees can be paid and how the fee amounts are calculated are prominent. Some of the participant statements regarding the theme are given below.

O219: Instructor it says I don't have any unpaid fees, how can I find out how much fee I need to pay?

O10:...I want to ask something, I went to all the ATM's yesterday to pay the evening education fee but I couldn't find the entry for ... university, it's still not over right because it says that the system opened after the 20th.

M7_231: Instructor I had a notice for my fee. I can't see it since yesterday, will it appear if I go to the bank?

3.5 GPA Calculation

The GPA Calculation theme, in which especially unsuccessful students' statements were prominent, were examined under a new title. The most outstanding participant statements about GPA are; having enough GPA to be able to take a course from the next semester and how GPA is calculated. It was observed that by taking participant opinions into consideration, the advisors tried to help their students and gave explanations in order to solve the given situation. Some of the participant statements regarding the theme are given below.

F22_255: Instructor I .. was in Year 1. but my GPA was 1.48. My SPA for the 2. term was 1.76. My GPA is 1.62. Do I have to repeat Year 1 again or do I have to repeat my failed 4 courses and take the elective courses for year 2.? I'll be happy if you help.

O121: I just looked at the course adding page and there is the Environment course, if I add this will it affect my 1. semester average for year one? My GPA is 1.73 at the moment, if I pass the course it will exceed 1.80. I completed adding my courses but are there any errors, can you help me? I can come to school during the day. Thank you Sir.

4. Discussion

According to the data, the participants encounter various problems at the beginning of the term and if the advisors offer help quickly the problems are solved in a short time. Kolog, Sutinen and Vanhalakka-Ruoho (2014) suggest that students can undergo rapid improvements through e-advisory practices. It can be said that e-advisory services are offered appropriately in helping students adapt to the university environment (Lacina, 2002). When student statements are considered, it is obvious that issues that they have difficulties in are more prominent than issues which students are curious of. In such cases, students expect to access their advisors, communicate with them and receive their help (Yağcı, Çetin, Turhan, 2013). Today, advisors consider using information and communication technologies beneficial while communicating (Beidoğlu, Dinçyürek & Akıntuğ,

2015). The large number of messages that students send to their advisors through digital media during the registration period indicates that the digital media are used effectively and appropriately by the students and the advisors. Technology can be used effectively if the teachers integrate them in these processes (Mazman and Usluel, 2011). Similarly, the expansion in the use of smart phones and the internet can be regarded as contributing to this issue becoming prominent (Karaaslan and Budak, 2012). Similarly, advisors have positive views with regards to the use of these technologies (Vinluan, 2011). It was suggested that internet-based technology use increased in advisory practices in schools (Owen & Korkut-Owen, 2012) and that these Technologies were regarded as necessities for today's school advisory practices (Grosshandler, 2012).

It was observed the channels which were created to enable advisors and the students to get into contact were being used for other purposes. It was stated that some personal issues were conveyed to the advisors by the students to their instructors and that the advisors responded to these personal issues by giving guidance. At some point, e-advisory can enable students who have difficulties in reaching their schools to access their advisors (Glasheen and Campbell, 2009). When negative conditions take place, student expectations occur as accessing the academic advisors and receiving help from them (Yağcı, Çetin, Turhan, 2013). Thus, sharing some personal states is regarded as an advantage of e-advisory.

Participants were observed to encounter problems in adding their courses, repeating them or about whether or not some courses will be available. This shows that detailed information should be provided concerning the elective courses. Some participants were observed to select unavailable elective courses but corrected it once they were informed. In addition, the term elective was understood by some students that they did not have to add those courses if they didn't wish to. Because this would lead to a deficiency in the credit amount for graduation, advisors tried to make corrections by giving feedbacks to students. Some participants was observed to not to respond to advisor messages informing them about faulty or deficient course selections. The reason for this can be stated as the students' adding their courses without considering the required courses and the given notifications and by not logging into the system again.

The reason why the number of messages are higher and similar in settings where only the advisor and the student communicate is thought to be because the participants cannot see these messages. Similarly, the low number of messages in publicly open settings (Websites) is thought to be based on this reason. The reason why the number of messages shared through the social media are higher is thought to be due to the students' feeling themselves better or more sincere in these setting than in open settings. In addition, the two main reasons for using the social media can be stated as because students express themselves better and because it facilitates communication (Öztürk and Akgün, 2012). The fact that students ask questions on issues that have been announced openly indicates that some students do not use these channels effectively or that the notifications are not understood properly. When all of the opinions are considered, it is obvious that students prefer their own short way in obtaining information. This can also be interpreted as students obtaining all-ready information through the shortest way. In addition, the given statements indicate that advisors provide students with comments that guide them in response to issues that they convey to the advisor without doing any research. This can negatively change advisors' attitudes towards e-advisory. Beidoğlu, Dinçyürek and Akıntuğ (2015) suggest that some advisors have negative opinions about online advisory. Because almost all the answers for the questions that the students ask were issued on the website before, advisors guided the students by sending them the links. This can be interpreted as university students seeking for ready and rapid responses to their problems without doing any research. Along with providing students with detailed information and explanations, is it really necessary for them to take on roles that of a researcher? Advisors are aware that the time they spend on consultancy is a loss for them (Esen and Esen, 2015). The fact that students continue to ask questions despite the advisors providing them with everything all-ready can be regarded as a serious problem.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

There were fewer messages where the texts can be read by everyone and a high number of similar or same problems were expressed in environments where conversations took place between the advisor and the students. Some students, however low in number, were observed to complain about issues that have previously been offered with explanations about what to do. Thus, it was concluded that these students did not read about the shared issues. The key role in such technology-based courses are the expressions, attitudes and behaviors of advisors. On the other hand, their statements, attitudes and behaviors for the issues that students present are also important. Many errors and misunderstandings were resolved by communicating through digital media without requiring the students to come to school. It was observed that the answers for most of the questions that the

students directed were issued on the program website before, and that students tried to reach the answer in the shortest way without doing any research. Thus, most of the students that expressed their problems were regarded as lacking of a researcher personality.

As results of the overall of study, it was concluded that problems were resolved by the advisors. Therefore, for proposals to be specified which based on study results; providing similar practices in all universities and the advisors giving rapid feedbacks to students will have positive contributions to the questions and problems of students. In addition, in order to prevent the students from asking similar or the same questions, the solutions for these common problems can be issued on platforms which everyone has access to. Also, the programs should offer detailed information by taking into consideration student expectations and experiences. In addition, it can be suggested that the software developed for the advisors and students to communicate during the registration period has turned into a channel where students express their various needs. Thus, keeping these platforms open to access all year long can help the students throughout the process. Finally, by taking the researcher feature that university students should carry into consideration, solutions which can lead them to conducting researches should be offered.

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