R. Izmagambetova* [iD]

Sakarya University
Sakarya, 54050, Turkey
*e-mail: izm_78@mail.ru

INVESTIGATION OF THE ADAPTATION OF KAZAKHSTAN STUDENTS AT SAKARYA UNIVERSITY TO THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Abstract

This study examines the perceptions and experiences of Kazakhstani students regarding their educational experiences and social integration processes in Turkey. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through a questionnaire containing both multiple-choice and open-ended questions and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research focuses on students' experiences in Turkey, the challenges they face, their social integration processes, and their recommendations for university management. The study is valuable for understanding Kazakhstani students' educational experiences in Turkey and identifying their needs. It aims to raise awareness about measures that can be taken to improve student's educational experiences and support their social integration. Findings from the research indicate that students generally do not face difficulties in making friends in Turkey and do not feel alienated. However, the duration of adaptation to the education system varies, and students experience the most difficulty in learning Turkish vocabulary and using academic Turkish. Effective communication with peers and instructors, as well as supportive environments, are emphasized by students.

Key words: social integration, educational process, adaptation, foreign students, academic language.

Introduction

There are many studies devoted to the processes of social integration of international students. Some of these studies focused on the cultural aspect, some on the psychological aspect, and some were directly devoted to the academic integration of international students.

What is evident in these studies is the focus on the most common problems faced by international students. The lack of language skills and its impact on academic performance deserves special attention. Guchlu conducted a study of the problems of adaptation of foreign students studying at the graduate school of the University of Pittsburgh and showed the influence of language on the problems of social adaptation of students [1].

Fluency in English is an important indicator of students' adaptation to a new environment. Research shows that the more often students use English, the higher their level of social adaptation. When students can communicate fluently with their classmates in English, they adapt more easily to a new environment and establish new relationships. This improves student academic performance. The language issue is important not only for international students but also for children from immigrant families or people born in the host country but experiencing language difficulties. For example, in a study conducted by Shahin, it was revealed that insufficient knowledge of the German language by students of Turkish origin in Germany negatively affects their academic success [2]. Similar results were later confirmed in other studies. Thus, the language deficit was identified as a factor negatively affecting the academic performance of Turkish students. This finding is consistent with broader research indicating that international students often encounter psychological challenges due to a lack of language proficiency. Lack of language proficiency creates a feeling of inferiority in students, which makes them feel deprived and their motivation decreases. In this study, it was shown that social isolation, loneliness, and depression were identified among the psychological problems faced by students. In addition, it is argued that

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the feeling of loneliness arising from a language deficit significantly affects student academic performance.

Gurbuz and Gulech studied the opinion of foreign students studying undergraduate and graduate studies in Turkey about learning the Turkish language [3]. In their opinion, the study of the Turkish language by foreign students is considered an essential element of adaptation to life in Turkey. In addition to language problems, among the problems faced by international students, there are also economic difficulties. Living in a foreign country, international students often face economic problems, such as the high cost of renting housing and expensive local restaurants. During the research, it was found that some students were forced to look for work due to insufficient scholarships and therefore could not devote enough time to their studies. This situation is considered to be one of the reasons for the failure of some students. International students enrolled in the universities of foreign countries not only study in a different field but also interact with a different culture and encounter different ways of thinking by participating in various activities in local communities.

Problems of social integration of foreign students in Turkey

While these challenges are common to international students worldwide, the specific context of studying in Turkey presents its own unique set of difficulties. Turkey's deep history and rich culture have led to an increasing number of international students choosing to pursue higher education in the country in recent years. However, the process of studying foreign students in Turkey also includes the process of adapting to Turkish society and culture. During this process, international students face various difficulties. The problems associated with the social integration of foreign students in Turkey, as a rule, consist of difficulties related to language, financial problems, academic difficulties, and socio-cultural adaptation.

In the study of Gyuchly, various factors were identified, such as language problems, financial difficulties, and problems with academic and sociocultural adaptation. In general, in the process of social integration, expectations such as learning the rules of a new country, knowledge of a common language, and communication come to the fore [1]. Perhaps the most important of these expectations is language learning, but this process is fraught with serious difficulties because learning a language takes time. Previous studies have shown that good language learning is directly related to student academic success. It was stated that although students from the Turkic republics speak Turkish, they speak and understand well, but have difficulty writing. Although the language used in the Turkic republics and Turkey is similar, students from the Turkic republics also experience some language adaptation problems. For this reason, for international students to integrate into life in Turkey, it is first necessary to learn Turkish well. Elma, Kiroglu, and Kesten, in their study on language and education problems of foreign students studying in Turkey, found that foreign students have problems with proper and comfortable self-expression when communicating with Turks. It was noted that these difficulties stem from both the inadequacy of the Turkish language and cultural differences [4].

Another study found that one of the biggest problems for international students studying in Turkey is academic performance. This problem is followed by economic difficulties. Although they are not very high, pressure and discrimination are also among the problems faced by international students [5]. Students' academic success depends not only on the language. Students who are forced to work due to economic problems cannot attend classes, which also negatively affects their academic success [1. – 106]. The combined impact of language barriers, financial constraints, and the pressure to succeed academically can also take a toll on students' mental well-being. As a result, in addition to the problems related to language and economic situations faced by students, psychological problems have also garnered significant attention from researchers.

Social harmony

The concept of adaptation appears in various studies with different definitions [6]. This concept is particularly relevant when considering the experiences of ethnic groups and individuals,

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as adaptation enables them to participate fully in various aspects of society, such as profession, culture, school, and education.

In the glossary of migration terms of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the concept of adaptation is defined as the process of accepting immigrants into the society to which they are sent, both as a group and individually. Since the concept of social adaptation is also flexible in terms of its content and functions, it is difficult to give a general definition. However, in general, it is explained as an individual's perception of changes around him and adaptation to innovations. In other words, the fact that an individual exhibits behavior per the expectations and opinions of people in the environment in which he is located, and is not excluded by society, is an indicator of social [7].

In the context of globalization, the development of technology, and communication networks, studying abroad is becoming increasingly popular among young people. However, along with academic success, students studying abroad face many sociological and psychological problems. Psychological and social adaptation to life in a new culture, university studies, and academic success are of great importance, and this process requires additional effort. Students who cannot achieve this harmony experience high levels of stress [8]. For this reason, the social adaptation of students is just as important for their academic success as their education.

Socio-cultural adaptation

While the concept of adaptation is defined as the process of accepting immigrants into the social order of the society to which they have just moved, both as a group and as individuals, the concept of sociocultural adaptation refers to a more social situation and touches on broader issues such as the daily life cycle of an individual [7. – 25]. In other words, it is a process in which immigrants from different societies and an established society enter into cultural exchange with each other, respect each other's cultures, and achieve synthesis without destroying socio-cultural existence through mutual communication and interaction (Aksoy, 2012) [9]. People trying to adapt to a new culture may encounter problems with communication, eating and drinking habits, clothing choices, maintaining social status, and establishing their identity during this process.

Stages of the cultural adaptation process

The process of cultural adaptation can be defined as the efforts of individuals and communities to rebuild their lives and create a more satisfying life for both sides. The migrating minority group becomes more inclined to the culture and language of their native society and learns it better by staying in the place where they migrated. This process has a positive effect on their cultural adaptation [9]. On the other hand, it was noted that minority groups who have a lower life expectancy in the place where they migrated tend to have a lower level of cultural adaptation. Another factor influencing cultural adaptation is that members of minorities migrate to countries with better opportunities and advantages than in their own countries; this situation has a positive effect on their cultural adaptation [10]. Similarly, it was noted that the level of cultural adaptation of a minority group increases in direct proportion to the level of income and education [11]. The process of cultural adaptation goes through certain stages, and adaptation is achieved at the end of this process.

According to a study by Tutkun (2006), the process of cultural adaptation takes place in five stages:

The period of the first month: At this stage, a person experiences the excitement of getting to know a new culture. Exploring new surroundings, meeting new people, and exploring different traditions is interesting and exciting.

Hostility/aggression: In the second stage, a person realizes that he has to make more effort to adapt to a new culture. This process causes more stress than expected, and the person feels isolated or depressed. A person may feel frustrated and angry because they cannot find what they are used to in their own country.

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Recovery, slow adaptation: In the third stage, a person begins to feel more comfortable as they get better acquainted with the new culture. They focus on understanding cultural differences, and his self-confidence increases. Thus, they adapt better to the new environment and begin to feel at home.

Completion of adaptation, biculturalism: At the fourth stage, a person begins to play a more active role in a new environment. They live in both a new and their own culture and can easily move from one culture to another.

Return to society: At the final stage, a person fully assimilates into a new culture. They fully integrate into the new environment, and his life becomes easier.

At the end of this process, the individual completes his cultural adaptation and can live more comfortably in his environment [12].

An important advantage for students of education in Turkey is the proximity of the culture of Kazakhstanis, and this makes the process of adaptation easier. It allows students to interact with the population much easier, faster, and more effectively, which directly has a positive impact on the future of Kazakhstani students. The next important advantage in the education in Turkey section is the proximity of the culture of Kazakhstanis to Turkish citizens, which makes the adaptation process easier and allows students to interact much easier, faster, and more effectively with the local population, make new acquaintances and business connections, which directly positively affects the future career of Kazakhstani students.

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In modern conditions of the development of the world community, a single organization will allow all Kazakhstani students, regardless of their place of study and residence, to realize their rights and interests, including the right to self-realization. In addition, Astana hosts the annual meeting of Kazakhstani student organizations abroad, organized by the Bolashak Association in partnership with the Center for International Programs JSC with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Nur Otan Party. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together young activists to share experiences, knowledge, and ideas. Thus, Kazakhstani student organizations abroad hold image events aimed at increasing the country's recognition in the world, familiarizing foreign citizens with modern Kazakhstan, the potential and capabilities of the country, culture and traditions of the Kazakh people. Such associations of compatriots abroad play an important role in the successful adaptation of students to foreign cultures. A large-scale organization with state support, in our opinion, is the most stable and win-win option, a fulcrum for Kazakhstani students abroad. As a result, it is considered necessary to help as many students in Kazakhstan and abroad as possible to learn about this organization. Therefore, in our work, we often mention the KazAlliance association as one of the factors that can help and support our students abroad. To do this, within the framework of cooperation with international centers to obtain information about existing student programs, we have developed special posters and business cards from which students traveling abroad could get brief information about some associations of Kazakhstani students. Among the conditions influencing adaptation, factors that promote or hinder adaptation in another culture should be taken into account. First of all, the following factors should be mentioned. 1. The degree of similarity or difference between cultures. To assess the degree of cultural similarity, various cultural distance indices are used, which usually include language, religion, family structure, climate, food, and clothing.

The results of numerous studies indicate that the degree of severity of "cultural shock" positively correlates with cultural distance [6]. 2. Features of the culture to which the migrant or

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"visitor" belongs. Thus, there is evidence (for example, statistics on suicide of foreigners in France) that the Japanese face great difficulties in the process of adaptation. This can be explained by the ritualized behavior characteristic of Japanese culture and the strong concern of Japanese "visitors" that they behave incorrectly since they do not know the "code of conduct" in the host country [7].

3. The peculiarities of the host country, first of all, how the "hosts" exert an acculturation influence on visitors. Pluralistic societies are characterized by greater tolerance towards cultural diversity than monistic ones. It is easier to adapt in countries where the policy of multiculturalism has been proclaimed in recent years.

Materials and methods of research

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the experiences of students who came to Turkey for higher education and are currently studying at Sakarya University. The research aims to understand their satisfaction with life in Turkey and their educational experiences. Data collection involved a multiple-choice survey and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This comprehensive approach leverages the strengths of both methods to gain a deeper understanding of the research questions. The data was presented in its raw form, without any manipulation or attempts to influence the findings. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

Research question 1: Is there a relationship between the level of Turkish language proficiency and the experience of education in Turkey?

Research question 2. Does the difficulty of adapting to the Turkish education system decrease as the length of residence in Turkey increases?

Research question 3: Is there a positive relationship between the level of social integration into university life and overall satisfaction with education in Turkey?

Research question 4: Is there a positive relationship between overall satisfaction with education in Turkey and the university assessment system?

Research question 5. Do students who evaluate the university assessment system more positively feel that the university provides them with more support?

Research question 6. Do students who feel that the university provides them with great support rate their level of social integration into university life more positively?

Research question 7. Does the frequency of communication between students and teachers outside of classes increase as the stress associated with classes increases?

A sample from the study

The universe encompasses the largest group to which the study's results can be generalized. In other words, the target population represents the universe. The sample of this study consists of Kazakhstani students living in Sakarya and studying at Sakarya University. The sample is the smallest representative portion of the universe that allows for concluding the entire population. 50 students were selected for this study using the snowball sampling method.

Data collection tools

The survey was used as a data collection tool in the study. The survey consists of 26 questions divided into 3 sections. The first section includes questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second section includes multiple-choice questions to assess the attitude of students towards the education system in Turkey. The third section includes questions about the social adaptation of participants and the cultural shock they experienced.

Data analysis and interpretation

The results obtained during the study were analyzed using the SPSS program (Standard Program for Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were performed to verify the results, and Cronbach's alpha test was applied to verify reliability. Graphs or charts were created to visualize the results.

The open-ended questions were subjected to content analysis using the Maxqda 2020 program, where conceptual maps were created to address the research questions. The frequency

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levels of main topics and subtopics were visualized through a code distribution model for each variable.

This research focuses on the experiences of Kazakh students in Turkey, the difficulties they face, their social adaptation processes, and their recommendations to university administrations. Seven questions were sought within the scope of the research.

If we analyze the qualitative data of the study, the participants stated that they had made friends in Turkey without any difficulties. The participants stated that they did not feel like strangers in Turkey. The subtopics related to the process of adaptation to the education system in Turkey and the duration of adaptation of participants to the education system vary, which shows that they have different personal experiences, and some of them find it more difficult to adapt. This map is supported by a conceptual map on the topic of difficulties encountered in adapting to teaching methods in Turkey, and methods of overcoming them, it can be said that the participants, as a rule, did not experience any difficulties or did nothing, but used various strategies such as focusing on language development and getting help from teachers. On the other hand, in the section "The most difficult elements of the Turkish language during training", the participants experienced the greatest difficulties in learning vocabulary and using academic Turkish. In the section "Elements contributing to the social integration of participants", empathy and open communication are highlighted as important elements contributing to effective communication between students and their friends and teachers and their social integration. Finally, when the participants were asked to make recommendations to university administrators, they paid special attention to issues such as cultural adaptation and integration programs, as well as academic leadership. As a result, this study showed that it is possible to raise awareness about the educational experience of Kazakhstani students and the processes of social adaptation in Turkey, about what students need and what can be done for them.

Results and its discussion

This study explores the experiences of Kazakhstani students in Turkey, including their challenges, social adaptation processes, and recommendations for university management. Seven research questions were addressed in this study. The first question is as follows: "Is there a relationship between knowledge of the Turkish language and the experience of education in Turkey?" The study found no significant relationship between Turkish language proficiency and the overall educational experience or satisfaction in Turkey.

The second research question examined whether the difficulty of adapting to the Turkish education system decreases with a longer duration of stay in Turkey. The findings indicate no significant relationship between the length of residence and adaptation challenges.

The third question explored the relationship between social integration into university life and overall satisfaction with education in Turkey. The results suggest that as the level of social integration increases, so does overall satisfaction with the educational experience.

Conclusion

The fourth question investigated the relationship between overall satisfaction with education in Turkey and the perception of the university assessment system. The study found that higher satisfaction with education in Turkey correlates with a more positive view of the university's assessment system.

Another question addressed in the study was: "Do students who perceive greater university support also report higher levels of social integration into university life?" The findings confirm this positive association.

Analyzing the qualitative data, participants reported making friends easily in Turkey and not feeling like outsiders. However, the duration of their adaptation to the education system varied, highlighting diverse personal experiences and challenges. While some participants indicated facing difficulties with vocabulary and academic Turkish language, most employed strategies such as focusing on language development and seeking help from teachers to overcome these obstacles.

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In conclusion, this study sheds light on the educational experiences and social adaptation processes of Kazakhstani students in Turkey. It highlights the importance of university support and language proficiency in facilitating successful integration and academic achievement. These findings can inform university policies and practices aimed at enhancing the experiences of international students.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ САКАРЬЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІНДЕ ТҮРІК БІЛІМ БЕРУ ЖҮЙЕСІНЕ БЕЙІМДЕЛУІН ЗЕРТТЕУ

Аңдатпа

Мақалада Қазақстандық студенттердің Түркиядағы білім беру тәжірибелері мен әлеуметтік интеграциялық процестеріне қатысты түсініктері мен тәжірибелері қарастырылады. Аралас әдістер тәсілін қолдана отырып, деректер бірнеше таңдау және ашық сұрақтарды қамтитын сауалнама арқылы жинақталды, сандық және сапалық әдістер арқылы талданды. Мақалада студенттердің Түркиядағы тәжірибесіне, олардың алдында кездесетін қиындықтарға және университетке бейімделу бойынша ұсыныстар берілген. Зерттеу Қазақстандық студенттердің Түркиядағы білім беру тәжірибелерін түсіну және олардың қажеттіліктерін анықтау үшін құнды. Мақала мақсаты студенттердің білім беру тәжірибесін жақсарту және олардың әлеуметтік интеграциясын қолдау үшін қабылдануы мүмкін шаралар туралы ақпараттарын арттыру болып табылады. Мақалада зерттеудің нәтижелері студенттердің Түркияда дос табуда қиындықтарға тап болмайтынын және өздерін бөгде сезінбейтіні баяндалады. Алайда білім беру жүйесіне бейімделу процесі ұзақ және студенттер түрік лексикасын үйренуде және академиялық түрік тілін пайдалануда ең көп қиындықты бастан кешіретіні баяндалады. Сонымен бірге студенттердің құрдастарымен және

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оқытушылармен тиімді қарым-қатынасқа түсуге және өзіне қолайлы ортаға ұмтылу жағдайларына ерекше назар аудару керектігі айтылады.

Негізгі сөздер: әлеуметтік интеграция, білім беру процесі, бейімделу, шетелдік студенттер, академиялық тіл.

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ АДАПТАЦИИ КАЗАХСТАНСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ САКАРЬЯ К ТУРЕЦКОЙ СИСТЕМЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются взгляды и практики казахстанских студентов в отношении образовательных практик и процессов социальной интеграции в Турции. Используя смешанный метод, данные были собраны с помощью анкеты с несколькими вариантами ответов и открытыми вопросами и проанализированы с использованием количественных и качественных методов. В статье представлены рекомендации о том, как студенты могут адаптироваться к своему опыту в Турции, к проблемам, с которыми они сталкиваются, и к университету. Исследование полезно для понимания образовательного опыта казахстанских студентов в Турции и определения их потребностей. Цель исследования - повысить информированность учащихся о мерах, которые могут быть приняты для улучшения образовательного опыта и поддержки их социальной интеграции. В статье сообщается, что результаты исследования показывают, что учащиеся не испытывают трудностей с поиском друзей в Турции и не чувствуют себя незнакомцами. Однако процесс адаптации к системе образования долгий, и, как сообщается, учащиеся испытывают наибольшие трудности при изучении турецкой лексики и использовании турецкого языка в академических целях. В то же время говорится, что особое внимание следует уделять условиям эффективного взаимодействия учащихся со сверстниками и учителями и стремления к созданию комфортных условий для себя.

Ключевые слова: социальная интеграция, образовательный процесс, адаптация, иностранные студенты, академический язык.

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Information about authors:
Ryskul Izmagambetova – doctoral student at Sakarya University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Sakarya, Turkey
E-mail: izm_78@mail.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0204-3501

Информация об авторах:
Рыскуль Измагамбетова – докторантка факультета социальных наук университета Сакарья, г. Сакарья, Турция
E-mail: izm_78@mail.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0204-3501

Авторлар туралы ақпарат:
Рыскүл Измагамбетова - Сакария университеті әлеуметтік ғылымдар факультетінің докторанты, Сакария қ. Түркия
E-mail: izm_78@mail.ru
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0204-3501

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