

## A Study on Adapting of Afghan Students in Universities of Turkey

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### Abstract:

The aim of the study is to propose a solution by examining the adaptation problems experienced by the Afghan students who are studying in different faculties and departments of various universities of Turkey. The survey based on the primary data collected by online sampling method and 60 different questions from Afghan students studying in Turkey by August 2017. In the analysis of the obtained data, SPSS version 21.0 program was used and parametric and nonparametric analysis techniques applied in the direction of research findings. The survey has been done in 49 various universities, 12 different faculties, and 161 students. Among the participants 39.1% had scholarships from the Turkish government (YTB), 26.7% were supported by the Afghanistan government, and 34.2% were studying by their own financial possibilities. All of the students came from Afghanistan for education purposes. Their parents' economic and educational levels are good; nearly all of them are well-educated people. Most of the students are living in dormitories, and they are happy to study in Turkey. They don't have any problems with interpersonal relationships and cultural adaptation with other students in dorms, as well as with people in Turkey.

Keywords: Afghan Students, Adaptation Issues, High Education, Turkey

### 1. Introduction

International student mobility has expanded at a rapid rate since the turn of the twenty-first century [1]. Turkey is one of the most attractive countries to study for the international students in the region and had around 31,000 international students in 2002, after 15 years it reached 106,918. The Turkish government is targeting to reach 200,000 international students by 2020 [2]. During the years of 2016/2017 the number of international students studying in Turkish universities increased by 26.8% and reached 106918 (71143 Male & 35775 Female) According to statistics, most international students in Turkey come from Syria (15042 or 13.9%), followed by Azerbaijan (14878 or 13.7%), Turkmenistan rank third (10418 or 9.6%), the top-five is closed by representatives from Iran (6099 or 5.6%) and Afghanistan (5251 or 4.8%). The top ten also includes Iraq, Germany, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, and representatives of Bulgaria [3].

The higher education institutions of various countries have perceived the importance of international student recruitment, have studied the problems these students encounter when they study abroad and have searched for methods and strategies to assist them in adapting to local culture and lifestyles. As current studies on international students have mainly focused on life adjustment, this study focused on the conformance issue of cross-cultural adaptation [4].

International students can bring substantial economic benefits to local regions and create business and trade opportunities [5]. Besides, international student recruitment can further increase cultural exchanges, as well as stimulate and promote international interaction and reciprocity. Therefore, the higher education institutions and scholars in Turkey both have perceived the importance of international student recruitment, and have studied the problems and challenges that are encountered by these students

studying in Turkey [10]. Also, they have sought methods to assist international students in adapting to local culture and lifestyles, which are also beneficial to international students' learning. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate international students' cross-cultural adaptation [6]. Afghan International students face particular problems, complicating adjustment to a new lifestyle, to the educational environment of the Turkish University, to an entirely new social and cultural environment. Every year more and more international students come to Turkey to get a higher education, and every Afghan student goes through an objective process of adaptation to university life [7].

Turkish language learning and cultural learning mutually support each other. Under the premise of language teaching, the purpose of cultural education is to increase the learners' understanding of the target language and to reduce cross-cultural conflicts in language and life [8].

## 2. Material and Methods

The primary data of this study were obtained from questionnaires conducted with Afghan students through the Internet. The target population to which the results of this study generally apply is all Afghan students studying in Turkish universities.

This survey was performed to investigate the adapting issues of Afghan students in higher education. For this purpose, 161 Afghan students from 49 various universities and 12 different faculties in Turkey were interviewed. In the sampling procedure 5% error and 95% confidence intervals were taken into account. Data from 161 Afghan students studying in Turkish universities were collected through the Internet and analysed by using parametric and nonparametric tests. The data collection survey was developed which considered explanatory variables used in the study included questions about socio-demographic such as age, gender, marital status, living time (in years), higher education programs, year of study (class), scholarship status, accommodation (living places), social and cultural events participation, watching Turkish television channels, involvement in sports activities, satisfying status with living in the city and reasons for not satisfying living in the city .

Analysis of the data was mostly inductive. Descriptive statistics including frequency and percentages, and chi-square test was used as the non-parametric statistical methods through the SPSS 21 program. To construct the dependent variable of the study, 161 Afghan students are Studying universities were determined.

## 3. Results and Discussion

This section expresses the descriptive statistics of respondents such as age, gender, marital status, living time (in years), type of programs, year of study (class), scholarship status, accommodation (living places), social and cultural events participation, watching Turkish television channels, satisfying with living in the city and reasons for not satisfying living in the city. The explanatory variables and their definitions along with frequency and percentages are shown in Table 1. Among the total of 161 students participating in this research, 12.4% (n = 20) were female and 87.6% (n = 141) were male. The participants were divided into different departments, faculties, and universities. The age of respondents was divided into 3 groups; the first group respondents are 18-25 years old, the second group is between 26-30 years old, and the third group is above 31 years of age. The percentage of the first group respondents is 68.3% (n = 110), the second age group is 28.9% (n = 48), and the third group is 1.9% (n = 3) determined. According to marital status 89.4% (n = 144) of the respondents were single and 10.6% (n = 17) were married. In terms of living time in Turkey (in years) 7.5% (n = 12) of the respondents lived in Turkey less than one year, 44.1% (n = 71) 1-3 years, 47.2% (n = 76) 4-6 years, and 1.2 % (n = 2) more than 7 years. In terms of the study programs, 73.3% (n=118) of the respondents were undergraduate students while 23.6% (n=38) were pursuing a Master's degree and 2.5% (n=4) a doctorate degree, and finally 0.6% (n=1) had an associate fellowship. In terms of year of study (class) of the respondents, 9 students (5.6%) were studying Turkish language, 17 students (10.6 %) were in the first class, 59 students (36.6 %) were in the second class, 33 students (20.5%) were in the 3th class, and 43 students (26.7%) were in the 4th class of the university. Regarding the scholarship status of respondents, 34.2% (n=55) had no scholarship and supported by their families, 39.1% (n=63) were supported by the Turkish

scholarship (YTB), and 26.7% (n=43) were supported by Afghanistan government. According to the term of accommodation (staying places) of respondents, 60.2% (n=97) were living in government dormitories (KYK), 9.3% (n=15) in private dormitories, and 30.4% (n=49) in apartments. Regarding the involvement in social and cultural events, 24.2% (n=39) of the respondents frequently participated in this kind of events while 34.2% (n=55) reported that their participation level was adequate. From the remaining part of the respondents, 29.8% (n=48) rarely participated in social and cultural events while the smallest portion of 11.8% (n=19) reported that their participation level was unsatisfactory. In terms of watching the Turkish television channels, 57.8% (n=93) students were watching these channels, and 42.2% (n=68) were not watching. Regarding the satisfaction level with the living city, 67.9% (n = 46.6) of the students were satisfied, 39.1% (n = 63) answered 'not bad', and 14.3% (n = 23) were not satisfied. The reasons for not satisfying with the city where the students lived were also included in the study and the responses were; inadequate transportation facilities (6.2%, n = 10), expensive life conditions (6.2%, n = 10), unfavorable human relationships (5.6%, n=9), insufficient social and cultural activities (2.5%, n = 4), dislike the city (3.7%, n = 6), low level satisfaction with the quality of education (2.5%, n = 4), and other reasons (6.2%, n = 10). Finally the students evaluated their overall lectures as successful (46.6%, n = 75), intermediate (51.6%, n = 83), and unsuccessful (1.9%, n=3) (Table 1).

According to the results obtained, Afghan students faced various problems in Turkey such as economic problems, high fees (university, Turkish language courses, dormitory, transportation, insurance, residence permit, price of airplane ticket, and entrance fees to the universities) They also have difficulties with adapting to the language courses and education system, cultural differences, student relationships, behaviors of the consulate staff, and the visa process with the Turkish authorities (Table 1).

Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relationships between the variable gender (Male & Female) and student's scholarship status, sources of scholarships, foreign students expectations from Turkish students and stating conditions with adoption society. The result showed that all these

four tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 of probability indicating that the variable gender was statistically associations with student's scholarship status, source of students receive scholarships, foreign students' expectations from Turkish students and stating conditions with adoption society.

The first Chi-square test was performed between gender (Male & Female) and student's scholarship status yield significance ( $X^2= 9.231$ ,  $P=0.002<0.05$ ), indicating that the number of scholarships for males is higher than the number of scholarships for females. This is due to the economic challenges, religion, sexual factors, cultural and social difficulties in Afghanistan.

The sources of scholarships students receive are divided into three groups; the first group students receive no scholarship and supported by their families (98.2% M & 1.8% F), the second group are supported by the Turkish scholarships (79.4% M & 20.6% F), and the third group are supported by the Afghanistan scholarships (86% M & 14% F). The Chi-Square test yield a statistically significant association between these variables, ( $X^2=9.683$ ,  $P=0.008<0.05$ ).

The relationship between gender and stating conditions with adoption society was found to be significant ( $X^2=7.632$ ,  $P=0.022<0.05$ ). It shows that difference in opinion in terms of gender with terms of the adoption in society was statistically significant.

The Chi-square test conducted between the variables gender and family income conditions yield no significant association ( $X^2=1.995$ ,  $P=0.369>0.05$ ). It means there were no significant relationship between gender of students and family income conditions (Table 2).

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between happiness level for living in the city and satisfaction conditions of the students. The relationship between these variables was statistically significant ( $X^2=17.959$ ,  $P=0.001<0.05$ ) indicating that as students feel happier to live in the city their satisfaction level tend to go up. The Chi-square test between the level of happiness for living in the city and participation in sports activities was also statistically significant, ( $X^2= 14.168$ ,  $P=0.007<0.05$ ). This result showed that as students participated in sports activities they tended to feel happier living in the city (Table 3).

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of this study may be taken as a basis for recommendations for the Turkey higher educational institutions. The study has found from Afghanistan international students' voices and narratives that Afghanistan students were overall satisfied with their learning experiences at the university. These positive experiences were related to a large number of factors, such as age, gender, marital status, living time (in years), higher education programs, year of study (class), scholarship statuses, accommodation (staying places), social and cultural events participation, watching Turkish television channels, involvement in sports activities, satisfy living in the city, lecture success and reason for not satisfying living in the city of the Afghan students. They expressed their concerns in these areas: the high fees of (university, Turkish language (Tömer), dormitory, transportation, insurance, residence permit, price of airplane ticket and entrance fees to the universities), unable to adapt to the language courses and education system, cultural differences, friendship relationships, uncomfortable the behaviors of the consulate staff and the most difficult issues are visa process.

In conditions of the type of programs (including associate, undergraduate, graduate and doctoral), the students participated in the research, 73.3% were undergraduate, 23.6 % were master, 2.5% were doctorate, and 0.6% were associate.

The results of the Chi-square test between gender (Male & Female) and student's scholarship status was statistically significant,  $P=0.002<0.05$ . It means the number of scholarship for males is more than the number of scholarship for females due to the economic challenges, religion, and sexual factor, cultural and social challenges in Afghanistan.

The variable gender showed no statistical association with family income conditions ( $P=0.369>0.05$ ). It means there were no significant relationship between gender of students and their family income conditions.

According to this research, generally social adaptation of the students contributes positively to the social adaptations of participation in social, cultural and sportive activities and they are satisfied with their education. It is important that lecturers and host institutions are professionally responsible for facilitating the international students' adaptation

to Turkish universities. Afghanistan students cope with these paradoxes, equip them with adequate knowledge of academic discourses, and transcend the culturally framed borders and subjectivities [9].

#### 5. References

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## APPENDICES

**A. Table 1. Definitions and descriptive statistics of explanatory variables**

Variables	Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	141	87.6
	Female	20	12.4
<b>Age (in years)</b>	18-25	110	68.3
	26-30	48	29.8
	≥31	3	1.9
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	144	89.4
	Married	17	10.6
<b>Living time (in years)</b>	≤1	12	7.5
	1-3	71	44.1
	4-6	76	47.2
	≥7	2	1.2
<b>Type of Programs</b>	Associate	1	0.6
	Undergraduate	118	73.3
	Master	38	23.6
	Doctorate (Ph.d)	4	2.5
<b>B. Year of study (Class)</b>	Tömer (Turkish Language)	9	5.6
	1st	17	10.6
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	59	36.6
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	33	20.5
	≥4 <sup>th</sup>	43	26.7
<b>Scholarship Statuses</b>	Own facility	55	34.2
	Turkey	63	39.1
	Afghanistan Government	43	26.7
<b>Accommodation (Staying Places)</b>	Government dormitory (KYK)	97	60.2
	Private dormitory	15	9.3
	Home	49	30.4
<b>Social and Cultural Events Participation</b>	Frequently	39	24.2
	Adequate	55	34.2
	Very rare	48	29.8
	Insufficient	19	11.8
<b>Watching Turk Television Channels</b>	Yes	93	57.8
	No	68	42.2
<b>Satisfy living in the city</b>	Yes	75	46.6
	Not bad	63	39.1

	No	23	14.3
<b>Reason not satisfying live in the city</b>	Inadequate transportation	10	6.2
	City is expensive	10	6.2
	Human relations are not good	9	5.6
	Insufficient social-cultural facilities	4	2.5
	did not like this city	6	3.7
	Education is not good	4	2.5
	Other	10	6.2
<b>Problems in their Country for the Process of Educational</b>	Visa and Flight ticket	26	16.1
	Not face to any problem	135	83.9
<b>Lecture Success</b>	Successful	75	46.6
	Intermediate	83	51.6
	Unsuccessful	3	1.9

C. Table 2. Chi-square test results gender with variables (%)

Variables	Male %	Female %	Chi-Square	P-Value
<b>Scholarship</b>				
Yes	81.7	18.3	9.231	0.002
No	98.2	1.8		
<b>Source of Students Receive Scholarships</b>				
Own facility	98.2	1.8	9.683	0.008
Turkey Scholarships	79.4	20.6		
Afghanistan Scholarships	86	14		
<b>Foreign Students Expectations from Turkish Students</b>				
Be friends	96.2	3.8	16.821	0.002
Visiting together	92.9	7.1		
Share the problems	88.5	11.5		
To helped for my lessons	88.4	11.6		
Make me uncomfortable enough	64	36		
<b>Adoption Society</b>				
Yes	70.8	29.2	7.632	0.022
Sometimes	89.4	10.6		
No	93	7		
<b>Family Income Conditions</b>				
High	75	25	1.995	0.369
Middle	91.8	8.2		
Low	85.4	14.6		
<b>Scholarship Sufficiency</b>				
Sufficient	94.1	5.9	0.798	0.671
Partially	87.5	12.5		
Insufficient	86.3	13.8		

D. Table 3. Chi-square test results of happiness form city with satisfied and participation sports activities

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Happiness Level for Living in the City</b>				
	<b>Yes %</b>	<b>Not bad %</b>	<b>No %</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
<b>Satisfaction Conditions</b>					
Satisfied	59.3	28.8	11.9	17.959	0.001
Medium	40.3	51.4	8.3		
Not satisfied	36.7	30	33.3		
<b>Participation in Sports Activities</b>					
Yes	62.8	25.6	11.6	14.168	0.007
Sometimes	37.2	51.2	11.6		
No	50	25	25		