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**LIFE SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN
TURKEY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY**

**TÜRKİYE'DEKİ ULUSLARARASI ÖĞRENCİLERİN YAŞAM
DOYUMU: BİR İÇERİK ANALİZİ ÇALIŞMASI**

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Abstract

Internationalization is a trend topic for higher education context. Student mobility as a significant component of internationalization presents academic, social, political, and economic gains for higher education institutions. In this aspect, ensuring life satisfaction of international students is significant to utilize from opportunities. The purpose of the study is to synthesize research in Turkey in relation to life satisfaction of international student. Content analysis was used as research design in the current study. Thirty-five studies were reviewed by following steps of systematic review. The researchers identified mostly life satisfaction domains as follow: academic, social and cultural, support service, and demographic effects. It was concluded that countries which are more developed, had western culture, and provided long standing internationalization activities connect satisfaction of international students to cultural issues and comparisons in macro level whereas the countries which are developing or undeveloped, had eastern context, and provided novice internationalization activities associate satisfaction of international students to tangible life situations. More empirical studies for future researchers and activities enhancing intercultural interaction for practitioners were recommended.

Key words: Internationalization, life satisfaction, cultural diversity, research synthesis

Özet

Yükseköğretim bağlamında uluslararasılaşma eğilim kazanan bir konu haline gelmiştir. Uluslararasılaşmanın önemli bir bileşeni olarak öğrenci hareketliliği akademik, sosyal, politik ve ekonomik kimi kazanımlar sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda fırsatlardan faydalanmak için uluslararası öğrencilerin yaşam doyumları sağlamak önemlidir. Çalışmanın amacı

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yaşam doyumuyla ilgili Türkiye’de gerçekleştirilen çalışmaları sentezlemektir. Çalışmada içerik analizi desen olarak tercih edilmiştir. 35 çalışma sistematik taramanın aşamalarını takip ederek incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın araştırmacıları takip eden şu yaşam doyumunu alanlarını belirlemiştir: akademik, sosyal ve kültürel, destek servisleri ve demografik etkiler. Çalışma sonucunda gelişmiş ve batılı toplumların daha uzun süreli uluslararasılaşma etkinlikleri yürüttüğü ve çalışmaların da büyük ölçekte kıyaslama ve kültürel durumlara odaklandığı görülürken gelişmemiş ya da gelişmekte olan doğu toplumlarının uluslararasılaşma etkinliklerinde yeni oldukları ve maddi doyumla ilgili durumlara odaklandığı görülmüştür. Gelecekteki araştırmacılara daha fazla sayıda görgül çalışmalar yürütmesi ve uygulayıcılara ise kültürler arası etkileşimi destekleyen etkinlikler düzenlemesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararasılaşma, yaşam doyumunu, kültürel çeşitlilik, araştırma sentezi

INTRODUCTION

Problem Background

Exchange of students and staff is a trend topic in higher education. In other words, internationalization becomes so popular that higher education institutions make great investments on. In global system, competition has been gaining a great importance. Passion to be competitive in addition to earning more money encourages higher education institutions to use internationalization as a powerful gun. Not only economic reasons but also political, social, and academic reasons increase appetite of higher education for the mobility of students and staff. However, despite attractiveness, sustaining internationalization is not as easy as dreaming. Therefore, critical issue is to make internationalization attractive and sustainable. Life satisfaction is the way to achieve this sustainability (Kaya, Çenesiz, & Aynas, 2019; Kondakçı, Demir, Ertem, & Oldaç, 2016; Köleoğlu, 2018).

Literature Review

Life satisfaction of students is one of the most studied topics in internationalization literature. The studies in national literature can be classified in two groups. The first group studies investigated satisfaction of Turkish students experiencing abroad study. Bakioğlu and Certel (2010) investigated life satisfaction of Turkish students who went abroad and found that students satisfied with cultural, social, and academic conditions. Moreover, the authors stated emphasis of students like satisfaction with new language learning, taking advantage of abroad experience for job status in the future, comfortable learning environments, faculty members with positive attitudes towards international students, student-centered instruction methods, and interpretation-based assessment techniques. Similar study was conducted by Yağcı, Ekinci, Burgaz, Kelecioğlu, and Ergene (2007) who concluded most of Turkish students at abroad satisfied with daily life, academic life, and student support services. The authors found that students experiencing university life at abroad satisfied more with clearness of physical environments, accommodation, and eating compared to medical opportunities. Moreover, students satisfied more with competencies and academicians, access to advisor, and comfortable classrooms compared to lack of bookstores. By considering student support services, students satisfied more with places taking care of students’ complaints and suggestions, and sensitive EU office staff compared to orientation, guidance, and financial supports. On the other hand, the second group studies examined life satisfaction of international students in Turkish universities. Study by Bayraktaroğlu and Mustafayeva (2010) showed that foreign students in Turkey did not have negative experience about interaction with native people, language, and communication with local students whereas they complained about economic conditions, eating habits, and uncertainty of future. Cevher (2016) examined the satisfaction of international students in a public university in Turkey. The author found that students were satisfied with positive

attitudes of faculty staff while they were not satisfied with support of academicians outside class. Moreover, they were satisfied with hospitable and helpful friends, colorful social life, and social activities of university while they were dissatisfied with breakoff phenomenon.

In addition to national literature, international literature has many studies related to internationalization in higher education. That generally has studies comparing and contrasting countries in terms of life satisfaction. Cantwell, Luca and Lee (2009) compared satisfaction of international students' satisfaction in terms of origins. Findings showed that The North American students had feeling less 'Personal Comfort and Acceptance' and 'Fair Treatment outside Campus' than did the Latin American and European students. Moreover, students coming from Latin America report the most difficulties on affordability compared to students coming from North American and Europe. Furthermore, the Latin American students were less satisfied with 'Jobs and Housing' than the North American and European students. Further, international literature has studies examining different types of satisfaction. Roberts, Chou, and Ching (2010) investigated level of satisfaction of international students in a Taiwan university. They found that the student had a high level of satisfaction in terms of university facilities, study program, and staff. Reputation for a strong support staff and high academic qualifications were the most emphasized satisfactory fields. Wadsworth, Hecht, and Jung (2008) modelled the predictors of educational satisfaction in US university classrooms. The model showed that perceived discrimination and acculturation had a direct relationship with educational satisfaction as well as personal-enacted identity gap partially mediated effects of perceived discrimination on educational satisfaction.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

The current study has significance in terms of research, theory, and practice. Considering research, the current study presented satisfaction areas of international students. Therefore, researchers may support from these areas to develop a scale concentrating on needs of international students. Further, both quantitative and qualitative researchers may recognize core points of internationalization of higher education such as social, cultural, and economic expectations of the students. In terms of theory, the study served trend in internationalization literature such that domains of life satisfaction may be evaluated as theoretical or conceptual framework of internationalization since the field lacked of commonly agreed upon theoretical framework. Finally, administrators in higher education institutions and policy-makers may organize activities, determine strategies, and implement policies in order to draw more international students.

In these respects, the current study aims to uncover life satisfaction domains of higher education students in Turkey and to compare these domains to international findings. By the way, research in both national and international literature is synthesized in terms of common domains.

METHODS

Design of the Study

The design of the current study is content analysis which is a kind of synthesis of primary research results into more general conclusions. Content analysis is a way of summarizing the main parts of the data (Cohen, Monion & Marrison, 2007). Further, Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) emphasized importance of conceptualization in the secondary studies.

Data Sources

The study followed steps of Petticrew and Robert (2006) in addition to PRISMA-P (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic review and Meta-Analysis Protocols). Firstly, question was defined as how the studies related to internationalization of higher

education present life satisfaction domains and compare with the international literature. Next, articles, book chapters, reports, and dissertations which are empirical were considered. In literature search, databases of Web of Science, EBSCOHost, ERIC, search engine of Google Scholar, and National Dissertation Database were selected. After this steps, elements of PRISMA-P which are identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion were considered. For identification, key words of internationalization and student mobility were searched by limiting studies to higher education context. Through screening, 54 studies were recorded. Thirty-five studies were chosen by considering eligibility based on content, context, and purpose of the study. Finally, 35 studies were included for the analysis.

Data Collection

Articles were synthesized in terms of conceptualization. In this synthesis, researchers of the current study constructed an excel form for categories about the studies. Categories were publication year, author, and topics of the studies. Instead of title of page or key-words, concepts in the purposes of the studies were considered. Thus, conceptualization was done in an effective way.

Data Analysis

When the researchers analyzed the studies, some codes were emerged. Codes coming from 35 studies were grouped and synthesized under themes since there were matched with common ideas. These emerging codes were also compared by two researchers in order to confirm similarities and differences. Both national and international resources related to internationalization were analyzed through triangulation to increase validity and reliability. Moreover, statistical documents through document analysis were reviewed to comprehend big picture of internationalization in Turkey. More than one researcher (different researchers) skimmed and scanned all documents. Lastly, findings of the review were disseminated by considering studies, themes, and codes.

FINDINGS

Before the findings of research synthesis were presented, the current study gave information about internationalization of higher education in Turkey. The number of students coming Turkey has been increasing year by year. In other words, the number of international students in Turkey is at an increasing trend in recent years. Table 1 depicts the number of international students.

Table 1. *Number of International Students*

Year	Number of students
2019	154505
2018	125138
2017	108076
2016	87903
2015	72178
2014	48183

Studies investigated life satisfaction of international students in Turkish universities. Life satisfaction domains were summarized in four headings which are cultural and social, academic, support services, and demographic factors. Table 2 demonstrates the studies with themes and codes.

Table 2. *Studies, Themes, and Codes*

Study	Themes (Domain)	Codes (Topics)
Cevher (2016)	Support service	Library, sports saloon, dormitory
Sungur et al. (2016)	Social satisfaction	Turkish usage, friendship
Sezgin & Yolcu (2016)	Social satisfaction	Socialization
Bayraktaroğlu &	Cultural satisfaction	Language learning,

Mustafayeva (2010)		communication
Özkan & Acar-Güvendir (2015)	Academic, social, and support service satisfaction	Academician, academic expectation, transportation, accommodation, Turkish teaching
Yardımcıoğlu et al. (2017)	Academic, social, and support service satisfaction	Socio-economic status, psychological condition, health,
Radmard (2017)	Academic and social satisfaction	Underachievement, socio-economic status, social adaptation
Beltekin & Radmard (2013)	Academic and support service satisfaction	Academician, assistance, material, method, library, computer, internet
Çöllü & Öztürk (2010)	Academic, social, and cultural satisfaction	Achievement, economic condition, communication, social adaptation, missing
Şeker & Akman (2015)	Academic, social, and support service satisfaction	Psychological well-being
Musaoğlu (2016)	Social and cultural satisfaction	Language problem, missing, friends, family
Coskunserçe & Bedir-Erişte (2017)	Cultural satisfaction	Online orientation, cultural integration
Demir (2017)	Academic satisfaction	Academic language skills
Köleoğlu (2018)	Social and academic satisfaction, demographic effect	Social adaptation, economic problems, educational problems, gender
Ghanbary (2017)	Social, cultural, and psychological satisfaction	Social activity, economic condition, family, language, access to university
Sadık (2017)	Academic and social satisfaction	Quality of education, guidance, assessment system, social adaptation
Kumcağız et al. (2016)	Social and cultural satisfaction	Social adaptation, language, orientation, economic problems
Şanlı & Poyraz (2018)	Social satisfaction, demographic effect	Loneliness, friendship, public attitude, gender
Karadağ (2016)	Social and support service satisfaction	Guidance, accommodation, social activity, teaching service
Ünal et al. (2018)	Social and cultural satisfaction	Language, Turkish structure, feedback
Usta et al. (2017)	Social and cultural satisfaction	Adaptation to city, communication, traffic,
Bacanlı et al. (2016)	Social and cultural satisfaction	Adaptation to city, public attitude, transportation, accommodation
Dilek (2016)	Social and cultural satisfaction	Turkish education
Torun & Bozkurt (2019)	Cultural satisfaction	Acculturation, cultural stress
Abaşlı & Akman (2018)	Cultural satisfaction	Multicultural education, cultural metaphors
Güçlü (1996)	Support services satisfaction and demographic effect	Language, health, accommodation, registration, religion, economic assistance,

Biçer et al. (2018)	Academic, social, and cultural satisfaction	gender, region, Methods, instructor, assessment, language problems, environment
Paksoy et al. (2012)	Academic and social satisfaction	Achievement, family, friendship
Gürbüz & Güleç (2016)	Cultural satisfaction	Turkish learning, speaking, communication, media
Gülнар & Balcı (2010)	Cultural satisfaction	Television view motive, acculturation, integration
Göver & Yavuzer (2015)	Cultural and support services satisfaction	Islamic view, transportation, pollution
Şahin & Demirtaş (2014)	Academic and support services satisfaction	Achievement, economic condition, catering, transportation, accommodation
Özçetin (2013)	Social satisfaction and demographic effect	City, friendship, social activities, sports, gender, income
Gökalp (2012)	Academic satisfaction and demographic effect	program views, gender, marital status, age, nationality

Synthesis of research in national literature showed four domains of life satisfaction of international students. Interaction with native people, friends and faculty member, language, city life, and university activities; academic quality including academic staff, learning environments, methods, assessment techniques; services or opportunities like library, computer, sports halls, accommodation, transportation, and economic conditions; and some demographic conditions like income, age, gender, nationality, and marital status drew attention respectively and social and cultural, academic, support services, and demographic effect in terms of satisfaction.

By considering four main domains, most of the studies concentrated on two satisfaction domains (Bacanlı et al. 2016; Beltekin & Radmard, 2013; Dilek, 2016; Gökalp, 2012; Göver & Yavuzer, 2015; Güçlü, 1996; Karadağ, 2016; Kumcağız et al., 2016; Musaoğlu, 2016; Özçetin, 2013; Paksoy et al., 2012; Radmard, 2017; Sadık; 2017, Şahin & Demirtaş, 2014; Şanlı & Poyraz, 2018; Usta et al., 2018; Ünal et al., 2018). Further, there are studies concentrating only one domain (Bayraktaroğlu & Mustafayeva, 2010; Cevher, 2016; Coskunserçe & Bedir-Erişte, 2017; Demir, 2017; Gülнар & Balcı, 2010; Gürbüz & Güleç, 2016; Sezgin & Yolcu, 2016; Sungur et al., 2016). Also, domains more than two were conducted in some of the studies (Biçer, et al., 2018; Çöllü & Öztürk, 2010; Ghanbary, 2017; Köleoğlu, 2018, Özkan & Acar-Güvendir, 2015; Şeker & Akman, 2015; Yardımcıoğlu et al., 2017). Lastly, there was no studies examining four satisfaction domains in the same research.

Examination of the studies in terms of domain and years conducted in, cultural domain drew attention for the last three years. Cultural satisfaction aspects including acculturation, cultural stress, multicultural education, cultural metaphors, language, adaptation to city, traffic, online orientation, and cultural integration were emerged in the studies (Abaslı & Akman, 2018; Coskunserçe & Bedir-Erişte, 2017, Ghanbary, 2017; Torun & Bozkurt, 2019; Usta et al., 2017; Ünal et al., 2018). Further, support services became generally trend topic between 2013 and 2016 (Beltekin & Radmard, 2013; Cevher, 2016; Göver & Yavuzer, 2015; Karadağ, 2016; Özkan & Acar-Güvendir, 2015; Şahin & Demirtaş, 2014; Şeker & Akman, 2015). The other domains were not specific to a special period such that they are visible in a broader time scale.

On the other hand, studies in international literature were grouped in terms of context and satisfaction domains. Considering international literature, two main trends are apparent. The first one is related to cultural diversity and comparisons which are studied mostly in western context (Cantwell, Luca, & Lee, 2009; Sam, 2001;

Wadsworth, Hecht, & Jung, 2008). The second one likes studies in Turkey such that cultural and social, academic, support services, and some common factors were visible mostly in eastern context (Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Asare-Naumah, 2017; Roberts, Chou, & Ching, 2010). To summarize, trend in the internationalization studies varies in terms of context.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The current study showed that life satisfaction of international students in Turkey higher education was formed in terms of academic, social and cultural, support services, and demographic ways. On the other hand, international literature on life satisfaction concentrated more on contextual and cultural issues. Therefore, it was concluded that countries which are more developed, had western culture, and provided long standing internationalization activities connect satisfaction of international students to cultural issues and comparisons in macro level whereas the countries which are developing or undeveloped, had eastern context, and provided novice internationalization activities associate satisfaction of international students to tangible life situations from infrastructure to affordability.

The current study showed that recent trend in the literature of Turkey is based on cultural issues while former periods received studies focusing more tangible issues like support services. In this respect, the study gave consistent results with the literature. Bedenlier, Kondakçı, and Zawacki-Richter (2018) conducted a meta-analysis study to reveal themes in Journal of Studies in International Education between 1997 and 2016. The study showed that student needs and supports were dominant between 2007 and 2011 while transnational context gained more significance rather than individual and institutional contexts between 2012 and 2016. Therefore, the authors concluded that there has been an evolving in the meaning of internationalization of higher education in international literature.

Special emphasis on cultural diversity for internationalization in Turkey is parallel to idea behind the internationalization literature. Gopal (2011) remarked influence intercultural competence on teaching environments. The author stressed training of faculty members in order to teach cross culturally through pedagogical strategies. Similarly, study by Jon (2013) showed the importance of intercultural experience and competence on internationalization in higher education. Further, Rui (2014) stated that China's strategy for internationalization of higher education was based on cultural integration between west and China to compete with world-class universities all over the world. To summarize, cultural diversity is a key factor for internationalization of higher education.

The current study detected a differentiation in internationalization practices for different contexts. This result is compatible with other studies. To illustrate, Delgado-Marquez, Hurtado-Torres, and Bondar (2012) examined influence of national culture on internationalization and found that universities located in countries with lower levels of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and future orientation are more internationalized than universities located in countries showing more institutional collectivism. Ayoun, Johnson, Vanhyfte, and O'Neill (2010) compared internationalization practices of US programs and non-US education and concluded that non-US programs seek opportunity of internationalization while US programs see the barriers to internationalization. The authors also pointed out non-US programs evaluated competitiveness and international cooperation more important for internationalization than US programs did.

The researchers of the current study implied that some of the universities in Turkey differentiates from others and look like more universities in developed countries. Therefore, researchers may come up with more contemporary perspectives for internationalization in this kind of higher education institutions. Further, it was implied that pattern of studies conducted in Turkey looks like each other so that this pattern may be evaluated as an opportunity to develop a theory based on satisfaction

of international students. Lastly, the current research synthesis may present ideas for policy-makers to draw more international students.

Considering results of the study, the researchers have recommendations to researchers, theorists, and practitioners. First of all, further researches should concentrate on more holistic perspective such that all domains emerged in the study may be investigated at the same study within mixed methods. Further, scholars or theorists could conduct grounded theory studies in order to develop a theoretical or conceptual framework on internationalization in higher education. Finally, policy-makers and administrators should consider strategies and activities to provide better life satisfaction for international students.

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