



Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Higher Education: A Case from Turkey

İsmail Meriç¹

Abdurrahim Emhan²

Sezgin Çocuk³

Abstract

Today, as student mobility in higher education is increasing, university environments are hosting more students with different races, cultures and backgrounds. Because the structure of universities is mostly designed in accordance with the culture of white students, white students are generally not very interested in the issues of differences and their general perception of differences is low. However, African-origin black students, who have had an experience of differences in a period of their lives, are more interested in issues related to differences and their general perception of the differences they experience in the campus environment is higher. The aim of this study is to reveal the challenges and opportunities arising from being in an international educational environment and to try to understand students' perceptions of differences. For this purpose, at an international university in Turkey, which has increasingly been the scene of differences, 192 students' perceptions related to differences were measured via questionnaires and the results were analyzed.

Key Words: Diversity Management, Higher Education, International Student Mobility, Multiculturalism.

1. Introduction

The demographic structures of societies undergoing transformation are also changing. As a result of technological developments, our habits regarding living and working are changing and the need to train new and different talents in higher education environments increases. In parallel with the

¹ Dr., mericismail22@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-9456-9438

² Dr., aemhan@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-1180-8817

³ MA., sezgincocuk@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-8542-4720

rapid change in the world, interest in international education has gradually increased since the 1990s. The emergence of new business areas with globalization, the development efforts of developing countries, the need for qualified manpower of developed countries, the increase in cooperation and interaction between countries, the change in production relations and many other reasons have led to the increase of international student mobility in the world and the differentiation of universities. In addition to these reasons, the internationalization of higher education and research, student and teacher migration due to globalization and the more accessible education (Altbach et al. 2009) increase the differences in higher education environments.

Higher education institutions want to internationalize their aims to attract international students, to spread their programs across national borders, to focus on internationally advantageous education programs, to recruit and retain employees, or to restructure management systems (Douglas and Nielsen 2012).

In this context, issues such as differences and equal opportunities in education and problems caused by international student mobility are frequently discussed by academic circles and become a priority issue in higher education institutions.

Socially, international students are in a potential "other" position because they differ from the general public in terms of common values, language, culture, ethnicity, color and belief. International students are foreigners in this regard. Similarly, in the eyes of international students, local students and the public are different. Therefore, the experiences and opinions of international students on differences are important in understanding the view of foreign students to society. Hence, the issue of international students is important not only for the internationalization of educational sciences or higher education, but also for evaluating the values that hold society together and the society's perspective and understanding of differences (Demirhan 2017).

In addition, it is important that successful and talented international students who graduate from universities are kept in the country in a systematic and planned manner and included in the human resources of that country (Bassett-Jones 2005; Ivancevich and Gilbert 2000). Thus, these countries gain great advantages in terms of training and employment of different and qualified personnel required by various business sectors in the country.

2. Literature Review

Multicultural Societies and Differences

Multiculturalism is a term often used synonymously with cultural diversity. Since all nation states in the world are multicultural, they exhibit a cultural diversity. The multicultural nature of a modern society is also reflected in its members. The fact that most individuals in a complex society are necessarily multicultural is often overlooked. In multiethnic and multicultural societies, diversity functions both as a unifying and separating force. The change in the demographic structures of countries, the increase and diversification of cultural differences in society with the effect of globalization and internationalization closely affect the culture, economy, politics and education of many countries and create a topic of debate and tension on the agenda of countries.

In American society, the term multiculturalism refers to two interpretations. First, multiculturalism emphasizes the notion that different cultural groups maintain their cultural identity in a dominant culture. Second, multiculturalism refers to the idealistic belief that all cultural and ethnic values should be respected and understood by the dominant culture (Saran 2007).

Because the democratic principles of the United States shape the mass education system, the basis of urban education in the USA emphasizes race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and equality of opportunity. The theoretical perspective of multicultural education acknowledges all cultural groups and ethnic origins and promises them opportunities. The multicultural curriculum requires schools to preserve diversity, reject persistent stereotypes and prevent the formation of new ones. In summary, although multiculturalism claims that no group is inferior to another, in practice hidden conflicts within schools often mean that one ethno-cultural group is dominant at the expense of minorities (Grant 2007).

Differences in Higher Education

Universities that want to maintain their level of excellence must be open to the concept of diversity, which is the fashion concept of the last 40-50 years (Fradella 2018), in order to attract talent from all levels in a globalized world. Therefore, nowadays universities touch on issues related to

differences more frequently in their mission and core values. The concept of "respect for diversity and individual differences" takes its place as a result of the reconstruction of the mission statement that reflects the common goals of universities and core values.

For example; a university has re-established its mission around the following concepts and is committed to: access to quality public education; quality teaching and learning; opportunities for individuals to realize their full potential; the challenges, joys, and realization of intellectual discovery; supportive and peer relationships; respect for diversity and individual differences and service to society. In this context, in a report published in 2019, it is stated that 85% of 159 different higher education institutions across Europe are trying to solve the problems related to differences with the highest level strategies and policies (Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019).

Differences include all aspects of identity and experience, including such visible ones as race, ethnicity, gender, age and mental / physical abilities and such invisible ones as nationality, work experience, income, marital status, military experience, religious beliefs, personality, talent, culture, organizational role / status, geographical location, educational status, learning style etc. (Daft 2010). Today, students of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, work experience and learning styles are frequently seen at international universities. For these students from many different countries, there is a need for an education that teaches the value of cultural diversity with various cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and educational backgrounds (Aydın 2012). Since the 1950s, the concepts used to describe non-traditional students in the education system have undergone a transformation. The concept of acculturation, which was used in the 1950s, was expressed with the concept of disadvantaged situation in the 1960s, and there was an evolution towards the concept of multiculturalism in the 1970s, and cultural differences in the 1980s. However, it is stated that the concept of diversity used for students from different cultures in educational settings has been used since the 1990s (Helm et al. 1998).

In the literature, differences are examined in different contexts. First, the literature sees differences as a challenge to faculty education that has to be overcome rather than an opportunity to contribute to students' education. Second, the literature in North America is often a racial scrutiny of differences. Depending on the historical and sociological characteristics of the USA, it is reasonable to pay attention to the intersections of race, socio-economic status and educational

background. Therefore, it can be said that the literature is less holistic than it might be in terms of inclusive pedagogy and curriculum design approach (Sanger 2020).

Differences either negatively affect or leverage the learning process (Jeannin 2013). Diversity in the classroom is a valuable opportunity that enriches student learning. New teaching and learning in international contexts emphasizes that diversity is more than race, nationality and religion. New research shows that in heterogeneous learning environments, students become more aware of differences and can increase learning efficiency (Sanger 2020). Research environments with differences are obviously more creative and produce better results. Different learning environments are similarly more stimulating than homogeneous ones. Consequently, promoting diversity, equality and inclusion in higher education institutions serves to meet the needs of communities better and also supports the development of institutional growth and capacity (Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019).

The vast majority of the related studies have focused on the racial and ethnic diversity of students and faculty members and highlighted a number of benefits of student and faculty members' diversity more. There are also differences in the personalities, backgrounds and teaching approaches of faculty members. Some classes are more diverse than others, but all classes are different in ways that can enhance learning if used appropriately. Students are ready to learn more when they feel safe to share different perspectives and identities with each other (Sanger 2020). A more diverse student population has been associated with a more favorable campus climate, a more cross-racial socialization, better educational outcomes, and innovative approaches (Cardemil 2018). In a study, graduate students were asked whether campus diversity contributed to them and whether they would recommend them to other students (Diner 2010). Some of the answers given by the majority of the students as a result of the survey are as follows:

- “The multicultural campus allowed me to open my eyes to people ... Otherwise I would never make friends.”
- “A student studying at this university can make others believe that she is studying abroad because of the multiculturalism and diversity found on this campus. By studying here, I feel like I have traveled the world.”
- “I love the fact that I will go to the same school with people from different cultures. Many different perspectives and good discussions are allowed for the classroom.”

Education in an international classroom has many challenges. In traditional classrooms, teachers used to view learners as one individual without realizing their past, expectations, or needs. These students were expected to exhibit the behaviors that might be the result of the information provided by their teachers without questioning their accuracy. However, in multicultural education environments, teachers and students value each other's characteristics and backgrounds and regard them as unique individuals. In this regard, differences are regarded as normal. As a result, in order to be able to appeal to each student, teaching practices have increased in parallel with diversity and the behaviors expected from each student have changed (Akinlar 2013). In addition, there is a need to understand students' expectations in order to meet the different needs of students in multicultural educational environments better. Teachers come across different learning methods, cultural backgrounds and various language levels. Students need to develop different levels of grammar and therefore need to be adapted to and supported in their language course. Similarly, multicultural and some older teachers have to develop their inclusive teaching skills to cope with increasing student diversity (Jeannin 2013).

Multicultural education is a transformative movement in education that thinks critically and produces active members of society. This is not just a curriculum change; it is a movement that demands new attitudes, new approaches and a new commitment to lay the groundwork for the transformation of society. It is also stated that multicultural education is designed to develop citizens in a democratic society taking into account the needs of all students. It explains how race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, and abilities / disability are intertwined with the educational process and content. Multicultural education is a teaching and learning approach based on democratic values and beliefs, affirming cultural pluralism for the harmonious coexistence of culturally different societies. In addition, it is stated that it is an inclusive teaching/learning process that aims to bring the intellectual, social and personal development of almost all students to their highest potential providing them with equal opportunities and bringing empathy and tolerance to the forefront (Aydin 2012).

The main goal in an international classroom is to design diversity programs that will result in positive effects for students in different groups. It seems unlikely that bringing together students from different cultural backgrounds and experiences and allowing them to solve the problems arising from differences will have positive results. Lessons from social psychology show that contact between different groups requires several conditions to produce positive results. First, all

groups need to perceive and know the value of diversity. Programs cannot be for only one group. Second, there must be equal power relations between groups. One of the main components of racism is that one group has more power to influence the environment than others. Third, diversity programs should be developed through prior research and evaluated in terms of program effectiveness. It is often assumed that well-designed diversity programs are as good as they seem. A study concluded that the lack of clearly stated program objectives is a common problem in evaluating diversity programs at around 40 colleges and universities. In fact, lots of schools have been reported with instances that well-designed programs actually have the opposite effect and make things worse (Helm et al. 1998).

In a study, it is stated that students with different racial / cultural backgrounds can have very different needs and perceptions of diversity. White and Asian students are happy with their own culture. It is likely that they will not be able to relate to diversity issues and their own cultures as the general culture and environment on campus is and will continue to be designed for them. This perception underlies the racism faced by other students who are not white. For this reason, it is stated that white students should be included in educational programs that teach them how to cope with diversity and its advantages for a healthy and multicultural society (Helm et al. 1998).

Also, a study found that awareness and sensitivity to diversity issues negatively correlated with overall satisfaction for all groups except African Americans. In other words, the more Asian Americans, Latin Americans, and Whites were concerned with issues of diversity, the less satisfied they were. This may be the result of self-concept and experience of diversity. Similarly, it showed that Blacks who perceived racial discrimination tended to have higher blood pressure than Blacks who did not perceive discrimination. Therefore, it can be said that awareness of diversity issues is not related to the general satisfaction of African Americans as there is a tradition among African Americans to deal with issues of race (Sedlacek 1987).

It is necessary to be proactive in the search for deeper learning for everyone among students. Differences between faculty members and students' backgrounds and identities can sometimes cause obstacles to learning. When students feel isolated, alienated and not belonging to the classroom, their loyalty and trust in the teacher weakens, which reduces their learning. Hence, it is observed that especially students from minority groups are alienated from education and their learning decreases when they are ignored and alienated by their teachers or peers (Sanger, 2020).

In addition, the understanding of diversity in campus settings should affirm both an appreciation of human differences and social diversity for students to be able to think critically (Verma 2007).

Studying in higher education institutions is an opportunity for individuals. Those who graduate from higher education will have a higher life satisfaction and are more likely to find a job. As labor markets change and the demand for the diverse talent provided by universities increases, higher education institutions will need to embrace all segments, including all groups. Universities cannot stay apart at a time when society is rapidly developing and awareness of different dimensions such as cultural, gender, race and ethnic identity is increasing. Therefore, the core university values of openness and tolerance require embracing diversity and being inclusive (Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019).

When colleges and universities first developed programs to diversify faculty, staff and administrative levels as well as students, they focused primarily on the heterogeneity of demographic representation (Fradella 2018). Thus, the terms diversity and inclusion have been used to refer to population heterogeneity beyond race and ethnicity, including gender, gender identity and orientation, socioeconomic status, and different forms of ability (Cardemil 2018). However, today, a wider understanding of inclusiveness aims to increase the integration, empowerment and diverse participation in all aspects of the systems and processes of higher education institutions. It is stated that perhaps the least successful of many diversity initiatives in higher education institutions to protect from the damaging legacy of laws and norms that artificially separate citizens from each other on the basis of race are those in the field of faculty diversity on campuses (Fradella 2018). It can be said that there is a relative lack of research on issues of difference between university staff and administration (Cardemil 2018). This relative lack of attention to diversity issues in university administrations negatively affects the critical principles of diversity, equality and inclusion.

International Student Mobility in Higher Education

Student and staff mobility created by the internationalization of higher education and research is another driving force of the diversity on campus (Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019). Considering the data

of UNESCO regarding the development of international mobile students in higher education over the years, it is seen that the number of international students, which was around 800 thousand in the world in the 1970s, reached 2 million students in 2000. The number of international mobile students, which is one of the most visible consequences of globalization and internationalization, increased to approximately 3.5 million in 2009 and 5.3 million in 2017 as seen in Table -1. It is estimated that this figure will reach approximately 8 million in 2020. Considering that the annual average cost of a student is around 40 thousand dollars, it can be estimated that the international student budget created by foreign students in the world will reach 320 billion dollars in 2020.

Table 1: Numbers of Internationally Mobile Students between 2000 and 2017

| | 2000 | 2009 | 2017 |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Arab States | .. | 214059,7917 | 331144 |
| Central and Eastern Europe | 145725,5 | 310382,1429 | 661383,3333 |
| Central Asia | 27568 | 47258 | 49874 |
| East Asia and the Pacific | 295339,5 | 707525,5 | 1084896,11 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 50682 | 142979,6751 | 209676 |
| North America and Western Europe | 1330473,286 | 1971289,833 | 2765854,953 |
| South and West Asia | 9711 | 25427,2 | 68799 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 94188,08333 | 119671,5178 | 137613 |
| Small Island Developing States | .. | 112681,3333 | 109850 |
| World | 2096714,702 | 3538593,661 | 5309240,396 |

From (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx>, accessed 21.08.2020).

The mobility of international students includes two main trends. One of them consists of students who come from Asia to study in the academic systems of North America, Western Europe and Australia. Countries such as the UK, Australia, and Canada have regulated their visa and

immigration needs to attract significantly motivated foreign students with a desire to maintain economic competitiveness and achieve financial gains. The other is the practice with programs such as Erasmus, which has been going on for over thirty years within the European Union as part of its various programs to promote student mobility (Altbach et al. 2009).

It can be said that student mobility is mostly from underdeveloped countries with a high density of young people to developed countries with an elderly population. The countries where foreign students are seen most are the USA, China and Australia. When we look at the statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for the year 2012, 16.4 percent of international students preferred the USA for education. The USA is followed by the UK with 12.6 percent, Germany with 6.4 percent, France with 6 percent and Australia with 5.5 percent (OECD 2012).

Throughout all population shifts, the United States has become one of the largest and most diverse higher education systems in the world. According to "Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report" published by the American Council on Education, the number of international students enrolled in higher education institutions in the USA in the 1995-1996 academic year constitutes 0.6 % of all students (Espinosa et al. 2019). This number reached approximately 1.09 million foreign students, which constitutes 5.5 % of the number of students studying in higher education in the USA in the 2018-2019 academic year. It is stated that student mobility contributed 44.7 billion dollars to the US economy in 2018. 52 % of the students coming to the USA from abroad are from China and India (<https://www.iie.org>, accessed 21.08.2020). In addition, higher education institutions reflect similar diversity figures in parallel with the great demographic diversity of the US society. According to the same report, it is stated that while 29.6 % of all students studying in higher education in 1996 were from other ethnicities, this rate increased to 45.2 % in 2016. Again, according to the same report, the rate of whites, which constitute the largest part of the US population, decreased from 79.1 % in 1997 to 61 % in 2017. Among the minorities, Hispanics, who constituted 11.1 % of the total population in 1997, constituted 18 % of the population in 2017. It is stated that Hispanics constitute the minority group with the greatest increase (Espinosa et al. 2019). According to a report of the OECD, it is expressed that higher education in the next decade will reflect the increasing racial / ethnic diversity of the US nation (OECD 2009).

Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Higher Education: A Case from Turkey

It is affirmed that there were 1.71 million foreign students in the European Union countries in 2017. However, it is argued that 37.8 % of these students benefited from the "student mobility" (Socrates / Erasmus) programs of the European Union and consisted of students going from one member country to another, 30.1 % of them were from Asia and 13 % were from Africa (https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en, accessed 21.08.2020). In line with student mobility in Europe, it is envisaged to establish at least 20 university networks across Europe by 2024 through the European Universities Initiative. This international interaction is expected to increase cultural diversity on campus as students and staff partly spend time studying or working in other countries, and the need to adapt the curriculum and methodologies accordingly (Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019).

International Student Mobility in Turkey

The number of foreign students at universities in Turkey has been increasing in recent years. In 2004, Turkey joined the ERASMUS program, which started in 1987 and facilitates student mobility in Europe. After being part of the ERASMUS program, there has been a great movement in international student mobility in Turkey since the early 2000s. The Bologna Process, which aims to create a European higher education area by harmonizing European-wide academic degree standards and quality assurance standards for each faculty and to eliminate the barriers to student and teacher mobility, also contributed to the increase in the number of foreign students studying at Turkish universities (Akinlar et al. 2013). After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, Turkey began to be seen as a suitable country for university education by students from the Caucasus and Central Asian countries that obtained their independence recently and were geographically and culturally close to Turkey. For this purpose, the Turkish and Related Communities Exam was started to be implemented in 1992 for students in the Turkic Republics (Demirhan 2017).

Since 2012, more attention has been given to foreign students both economically and academically. The Program of Turkey's Scholarship was put into practice by The Turks Abroad and Related Communities Presidency in 2012 following its establishment in 2010 and 42.000 applications were made that year. Despite this increase, according to the OECD data for the year 2012, it is indicated that Turkey's share in international student mobility in the world is 0.9 %. With this rate, Turkey

is among the countries sending the most students abroad and receiving the least in international student mobility.

The number of foreign students studying in Turkey has increased over time. According to the data of the Council of Higher Education, approximately 155 thousand foreign students received education at Turkish universities in the 2018-2019 academic year. It is also stated that the number of new students enrolling in Turkish universities in the same academic year is around 53 thousand (<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>, accessed 21.08.2020). It is aimed to increase the number of international students to 250 thousand by 2023 (<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr>, accessed 21.08.2020). According to Turkey's scholarship regulations, students who apply to the related program in person are given pocket money depending on undergraduate, graduate and doctoral education and are paid tuition fees. Also, a 1- year Turkish language course, accommodation, health insurance and air fares services are provided free of charge (RTS 2014). In addition to foreign students, academicians, researchers and public personnel in other countries are also supported with different research modules and Turkish language education. While the contribution of foreign students to the countries' economies is billions of dollars in America and Europe, the situation is different in Turkey. The education expenses of foreign students in Turkey are supported with the overall budget of the country, which means taxes given by citizens.

When we look at the country origin of the students studying at Turkish universities, it is seen that the students from the American and European countries are in the minority and the students from African and Asian countries are in the majority. According to statistics from the European Union (https://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en, accessed 21.08.2020), about 70 % of the foreign students studying in Turkey in 2017 were from Asia, 13 % of them were from African countries. The vast majority of foreign or international students from Asian countries are from the Turkic Republics and related communities, whose number has been increasing since 1992 and the number of students from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Syria is at the top (Demirhan 2017). Although approximately 15 % of the students coming for higher education come from European countries, it is estimated that a significant portion of these students are children of Turkish families living in Europe.

It can be said that students from Asian and African countries who feel more socio-cultural proximity to Turkey prefer it for their university education. When we consider the reality that most

Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Higher Education: A Case from Turkey

of the students who go abroad from Turkey for university education prefer Europe or North America, it is criticized that Turkish universities are not internationalizing but they are becoming more and more African or Asian (Gözler 2019).

As a result of the increase in the number of foreign students at Turkish universities, classroom environments have become more cultured. Due to the changing demographics of students at Turkish universities, the need for all faculty members to understand students from different cultures better and to work efficiently has increasingly become important. University lecturers need to take students' experiences, cultural characteristics and perspectives into account in order to provide culturally sensitive teaching practices. Diversity influences how students learn and therefore requires a teacher to create a culturally fair classroom environment. Otherwise, cultural misunderstandings can occur between teachers and students in the classroom, which can negatively affect students' educational outcomes (Akinlar 2013).

There have been many studies and research on foreign students studying in Turkey. Demirhan (2017) analyzed 40 of these studies and reached interesting results in a few studies on student differences. Despite being limited, information on the experiences of foreign students in the context of discrimination or racism is included in the studies. According to the findings of a study conducted by Şahin and Demirtaş (2014) on the factors affecting the success of foreign students, the percentage of students who think that teachers discriminate against them is 14.2%. In another study, foreign students enjoy the education system in Turkey because it doesn't allow bribe. In addition, students who are not satisfied with this system complain that everything is based on memorization and think that some teachers do not act objectively (Bayraktaroğlu and Mustafayeva 2009).

In related studies, it is possible to mention an acceptance that students from Turkish and related communities are culturally similar to local students. Despite these similarities, Ozcetin's (2013) study in which students from Central Asia, Middle East, and the Balkans constituted 73% of the total students in the survey showed that the biggest differences between students' own countries and Turkey were cultural differences and the most obvious problems they experienced in Turkey were related to cultural adaptation. These findings show that there is also the possibility of conflict with local students for students from the Turkic republics.

Following explanations for the concepts of multiculturalism, mobility in higher education and diversity, the following assumptions can be developed:

H₁: African students' perceptions of diversity issues are higher than whites.

H₂: There is a negative relationship between white students' (White, Asian and Latin) perceptions of difference and their general satisfaction.

3. Method of Research

Research Population and Sample: Except for demographic variables, a questionnaire consisting of 26 statements was used to obtain data. Questionnaires were randomly distributed to foreign students studying at a university in Turkey that provides education in English. The original of the scale is in English and was applied without translation. Analyses were conducted on 192 questionnaires suitable for evaluation.

a) Demographic Information Form: In this questionnaire that aims at collecting demographic information of the participants, there are questions regarding participants' age, gender, educational status, marital status, faculty and class they attend, and which countries they come from.

b) Diversity in Higher Education Scale: This scale was developed by the University of Maryland (2013) to determine the diversity perception levels of students from different racial and ethnic cultures studying at a university. There are six sub-dimensions in the scale. These:

1. General Diversity Experiences on Campus: In this sub-dimension consisting of 6 questions, a 5-point Likert type rating was used. The answers given to the questions in the questionnaire were evaluated with scores ranging from 1 to 5, and were arranged as (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Partially Agree (4) Agree (5) Fully Agree. To increase the reliability of the scale, one question was dropped and this dimension was measured with 5 questions. In the reliability analysis for the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.78. The skewness and kurtosis values were found between -1 and +1, and the distribution was normal.

2. Your Diversity Experiences on Campus: In this sub-dimension consisting of 8 questions, a 4-point Likert type rating was used. The answers given to the questions in the questionnaire were

evaluated with scores varying from 1 to 4, and were arranged as (1) Little or Not (2) A little (3) Quite (4) Substantially. In the reliability analysis for the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.69. The skewness and kurtosis values were found between -1 and +1, and the distribution was normal.

3. *Behaviors toward Fair*: In this sub-dimension consisting of 5 questions, a 5-point Likert type rating was used. The answers given to the questions in the questionnaire were evaluated with scores ranging from 1 to 5, and were arranged as (1) Very Unfairly (2) Unfairly (3) Neutral (4) Quite (5) Quite Fair. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.81 in the reliability analysis for the scale. The skewness and kurtosis values were found between -1 and +1, and the distribution was normal.

4. *Ethno Centrist Approaches*: In this sub-dimension consisting of 4 questions, a 5-point Likert type rating was used. The answers given to the questions in the questionnaire were evaluated with scores varying from 1 to 5, and were arranged as (1) None (2) A little (3) A little bit (4) Quite (5) Quite a large extent. In the reliability analysis for the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.76. The skewness and kurtosis values were found between -1 and +1, and the distribution was normal.

5. *Racist Atmosphere in the Faculties*: In this sub-dimension consisting of 2 questions, a 4-point Likert type rating was used. The answers given to the questions in the questionnaire were evaluated with scores ranging from 1 to 4, and were arranged as (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Frequently. In the reliability analysis for the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.63. The skewness and kurtosis values were found between -1 and +1, and the distribution was normal.

6. *Racist Atmosphere in the Students*: In this sub-dimension consisting of 2 questions, a 4-point Likert type rating was used. The answers given to the questions in the questionnaire were evaluated with scores ranging from 1 to 4, and were arranged as (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Frequently. In the reliability analysis for the scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.72. The skewness and kurtosis values were found between -1 and +1, and the distribution was normal.

c) Demographic Findings

It was determined that most of the students participating in the study were between the ages of 21-25 (77.6 %). According to the gender variable, it was seen that male students were more (75 %) and most of the participants were single (95.8 %). In terms of ethnic origin, it was found that the majority of the students participating in the study were Asian students from Turkic republics (61.5 %). Again, it was observed that the participants of the study were students studying at the engineering faculty (44.3 %). Finally, it was determined that the majority of the participants in the study were undergraduate students (93.8 %).

Table 2: Demographic Variables (n: 192)

| Variables | Frequency (%) | Variables | Frequency (%) |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Age | | Faculty | |
| Less than 20 | 39 (20,3) | Social sciences | 77 (40,1) |
| 21-25 | 149 (77,6) | Engineering | 85 (44,3) |
| 26+ | 3 (2,1) | Medicine | 28 (14,6) |
| Gender | | Education | |
| Male | 144 (75,0) | Undergraduate | 180 (93,8) |
| Female | 48 (25,0) | Graduate | 12 (6,2) |
| Nation | | | |
| Africa | 68 (35,4) | Marital Status | |
| Asia | 118 (61,5) | Single | 184 (95,8) |
| Others | 3 (2,6) | Married | 8 (4,2) |

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

| | Minimum | Maximum | \bar{x} | SS | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---------|---------|-----------|-----|----------|----------|
| 1.General diversity experiences on campus | 5,0 | 25,0 | 15,5 | 4,1 | -,272 | ,011 |
| 2.Your diversity experiences on campus | 8,0 | 32,0 | 20,2 | 4,3 | -,445 | ,387 |
| 3.Behaviors toward fair | 5,0 | 25,0 | 16,3 | 4,2 | -,275 | ,144 |
| 4.Ethno centrist approaches | 4,0 | 20,0 | 11,2 | 3,4 | ,159 | ,370 |
| 5.Racist atmosphere in the faculties | 2,0 | 8,0 | 4,5 | 1,7 | ,034 | -1,042 |
| 6.Racist atmosphere in the students | 2,0 | 8,0 | 4,6 | 1,7 | ,065 | -,819 |

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Results Regarding Variables

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| 1 General diversity experiences on campus | 1 | | | | | |
| 2 Your diversity experiences on campus | ,32* | 1 | | | | |
| 3 Behaviors toward fair | ,54* | ,22* | 1 | | | |
| 4 Ethno centrist approaches | ,26* | ,37* | ,31* | 1 | | |
| 5 Racist atmosphere in the faculties | ,086 | ,29* | ,010 | ,41* | 1 | |
| 6 Racist atmosphere in the students | ,124 | ,36* | ,058 | ,37* | ,69* | 1 |

Spearman's Correlation **p<0,01

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that generally the sub-dimensions used in the scale have statistically significant relationships with each other.

Difference analysis results according to some demographic variables are as follows:

- Male students have a higher perception of your diversity experiences on campus than female students ($p < 0.05$, $t: -2,54$).
- Female students have more perceptions of general diversity experiences on campus and behaviors toward fair than males ($p < 0.05$, $t: 2,33$; $p < 0.05$, $t: 2,0$).
- African black students have more perceptions of general diversity experiences on campus than Asian students who are mostly from Turkic republics ($p < 0.05$, $t: 2,24$).
- Asian students, mostly from Turkic republics, have more perceptions of behaviors toward fair than African black students ($p < 0.01$, $t: 3,33$).
- It was observed that the general diversity experiences on campus scores of the students studying in the humanities and social sciences were higher than the students studying at the engineering faculty ($p < 0.01$, $F: 5,94$).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Today, higher education environments are transforming into a multicultural structure formed by students of different races, cultures and backgrounds with the effect of changing demographic structure, globalization and internationalization. Differences can be a source of innovation and wealth when managed well and when not managed well, they can cause misunderstandings and conflicts and negatively affect the success of education. The aim of this study was to measure the perceptions students experience due to their differences in an international educational setting.

When the results are examined, African students' perceptions of *general diversity experiences on campus* are higher than white students of Asian origin and mostly from Turkic republics. This result is similar to the result of the African origin students' perception of difference, which Sedlacek (1987) stated. According to Sedlacek, the perception of difference is high among African students who have an experience of differences in a period of their lives due to the tradition of dealing with issues related to differences. With this result, it is seen that the first assumption put forward in this study "African students' perception of difference issues is higher than whites" is supported.

Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Higher Education: A Case from Turkey

Additionally, Sedlacek expresses that white students whose educational environments are arranged according to their culture have a low perception of difference because they are not interested in the issues of difference. As a result of this study, the fact that the perceptions of Asian-origin white students regarding differences are lower than those of African-origin students is in line with the finding of Sedlacek. This result supports the second assumption put forward "There is a negative relationship between white students' (White, Asian and Latin) perceptions of difference and their general satisfaction."

According to the study, it is an interesting result that Asian students, most of whom come from Turkic republics, have higher *behaviors toward fair* perceptions than African black students. It is a natural expectation that Turkish origin students want to see more fair practices and closeness in higher education institutions of a country with which they are historically and culturally close. However, according to the survey results, it is seen that these students have a high perception of difference in fair practice. This result is in parallel with the result of a study that was conducted earlier on students coming from Turkic Republics at two different state universities in Turkey and related to the topic "some teachers do not act objectively" (Şahin and Demirtaş, 2014; Bayraktaroğlu and Mustafayeva 2009). This result supports the third assumption put forward "White students' perception of diversity issues is lower than African students."

The finding that the *general diversity experiences on campus* scores of the students studying in the humanities and social sciences are higher than the students studying at the engineering faculty and their *behaviors toward fair* scores are higher than the students studying at the engineering and medical faculties is a result that requires research. Due to the courses taken in the humanities and social sciences, it is more likely that their socio-political and psychological awareness is higher than the students studying at engineering and medical faculties and their perceptions of differences and fair practice expectations are higher. It can be said that students studying at medical and engineering faculties have more lecture-intensive student life compared to social sciences students due to the fact that there are more laboratory and application-oriented courses. This intensity probably affects their perceptions of differences and their expectations of fair practice.

Finally, it is a very interesting finding that female students have higher perceptions of *general diversity experiences on campus* and *behaviors toward fair* compared to males. In fact, it could be expected that this result would be the opposite, that is, boys' perceptions were high in these

dimensions due to their combative and confrontational characters and girls' perceptions of differences were low due to their accommodating and harmonious character. An in-depth study of this finding within the scope of (gender) studies may be an interesting subject of research.

Measuring the perceptions of foreign students about differences in a higher education institution is important in terms of showing how suitable the higher education institution is for students with different races, cultures and backgrounds. Higher education institutions that want foreign students to have more positive perceptions of differences should first develop inclusive policies and methods that accept and respect differences. For this purpose, it should harmonize the aims and objectives of education and training for different students with different cultures and backgrounds, develop and implement training programs to increase the awareness of faculty members and staff working in faculties regarding differences.

References

- Akinlar, Aylin, Eksi, Gul, Alci, Bülent, (2013),“Multicultural Competence Level of University Instructors: A Perspective from a Turkish Context”, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4, (14).
- Altbach, Philip G., Liz Reisberg, Laura E. Rumbley, (2009), *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution*, Paris, France: UNESCO.
- Aydın, Hasan, (2012), “Multicultural Education Curriculum Development in Turkey”, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 3(3):277-286.
- Bassett-Jones, Nigel, (2005), “The paradox of Diversity Management, Creativity and Innovation”, *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 14(2), 169-175.
- Bayraktaroğlu, Serkan, ve Lale, Mustafayeva, (2009, “Türk Yükseköğretim Sistemi ve Türk Dünyası İlişkileri: Sakarya Üniversitesinde Eğitim Gören Yabancı Uyruklu Öğrenciler Örneği”, *Journal of Azerbaijani Studies*, 12(1-2), p. 284-292.

Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Higher Education: A Case from Turkey

Cardemil, Esteban, (2018), "The Gap Between Assessment and Creating Inclusion", SunHee Kim Gertz, Betsy Huang, Lauren Cyr, (Eds), *Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Societal Contexts*, Palgrave, Mcmillan.

Claeys-Kulik, Anna-Lena, Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, Henriette Stöber, (2019), *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions Results from the INVITED Project*, EUA, Brussel.

Daft, Richard L., (2010), *Management*, Ninth Edition, South-Western, Cengage Learning, Canada.

Demirhan, Kamil, (2017), "Ulusal Alanyazında Uluslararası Öğrenciler ve Uluslararası Öğrencileri Siyasal Açıdan Düşünmek", *International Journal of Management Economics and Business* ICMEB 17: 547-562.

Diner, Steven J., (2010), "Prestige and Quality in American Colleges and Universities", pp.83-88, Daniel Little and Satya P. Mohanty (Eds), *The Future of Diversity Academic Leaders Reflection American Higher Education*, Palgrave, Macmillan.

Douglas E. Mitchell and Selin Yildiz Nielsen, (2012), "Internationalization and Globalization in Higher Education, Globalization - Education and Management Agendas", Hector Cuadra-Montiel, IntechOpen.

Espinosa, Lorelle L., Jonathan M. Turk, Morgan Taylor, and Hollie M. Chessman, (2019), *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education American Council on Education A Status Report Executive Summary*.

Fradella, Henry F., (2018), "Supporting Strategies for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Higher Education Faculty Hiring", SunHee Kim Gertz, Betsy Huang, Lauren Cyr, (Eds), *Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Societal Contexts*, Palgrave, Mcmillan.

Gözler, Kemal, (2019), "Üniversitelerde Yabancı Öğrenci Sayısı Sorunu: Akademinin Değersizleşmesi Üzerine Makaleme İkinci Ek", www.anayasa.gen.tr/yabanci-ogrenci.htm

Grant, Carl A., (2007), "Diversity and Inclusion in the United States the Dual Structures that Prevent Equality", p.47- 60, Gajendra K. Verma, Christopher R. Bagley and Madan Mohan Jha (Eds), *International Perspectives on Educational Diversity and Inclusion, Studies from America, Europe and India*, Routledge, Londen.

Helm, Edward. G., Sedlacek, William. E., Prieto, Dario. O., (1998), “The Relationship Between Attitudes toward Diversity and overall Satisfaction of University Students by Race”, *Journal of College Counseling*. 1, 111-120.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/turkiyedeki-uluslararası-ogrenci-sayisi-172-bine-ulasti/1592552>,
[a](#)ccessed 21.08.2020

<https://www.aacu.org/aacu-news/newsletter/2019/march/facts-figures>, [a](#)ccessed 21.08.2020

<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>, [a](#)ccessed 21.08.2020

<http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx>, [a](#)ccessed 21.08.2020

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Learning_mobility_statistics#Number_and_share_of_students_from_abroad, accessed 21.08.2020

<https://www.iie.org/Why-IIE/Announcements/2019/11/Number-of-International-Students-in-the-United-States-Hits-All-Time-High>, [a](#)ccessed 21.08.2020

<https://www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr>, accessed 21.08.2020

Ivancevich, John, M., and Gilbert, Jacqueline, A. (2000), “Diversity management: Time for a New Approach”, *Public Personnel Management*, 29 (1), 75-92.

Jeannin, Loise. (2013), “Students’ Perception of Diversity in an International Classroom”, *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 3(4), 6-23.

OECD, (2009), *Higher Education to 2030 – Volume 2: Globalisation*.

OECD, (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, Paris.

Özçetin, Seçkin, (2013), *Yükseköğrenim Gören Yabancı Uyruklu Öğrencilerin Sosyal Uyumlarını Etkileyen Etmenler*, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi.

Sanger Catherine S. (2020) “Diversity, Inclusion, and Context in Asian Higher Education”, Catherine Shea Sanger, Nancy W. Gleason (Eds), *Diversity and Inclusion in Global Higher Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore.

Saran, Rupam, (2007), “Reconceptualizing Multiculturalism in American Urban Education”, p.61-75, Gajendra K. Verma, Christopher R. Bagley and Madan Mohan Jha (Eds), *International*

Students' Perceptions of Diversity in Higher Education: A Case from Turkey

Perspectives on Educational Diversity and Inclusion, Studies from America, Europe and India, Routledge, London.

Sedlacek, William, (1987),” Black Students on White Campuses: 20 Years of Research”, *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 28. 484-495.

Şahin, Münir, Hasan, Demirtaş, (2014), “Üniversitelerde Yabancı Uyruklu Öğrencilerin Akademik Başarı Düzeyleri, Yaşadıkları Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri”, *Milli Eğitim*, 204, 88-113.

Regulation of Turkey Scholarships (RTS), (2014), *Legal Gazette of the Republic of Turkey* dated 17/6/2014 and numbered 29033.

Verma, Gajendra K. (2007) “Diversity and multicultural education Cross-cutting issues and concepts”, p.21-30, Gajendra K. Verma, Christopher R. Bagley and Madan Mohan Jha, (Eds), *International Perspectives on Educational Diversity and Inclusion, Studies from America, Europe and India*, Routledge, London.