

# Content Structure of University Radio Stations in Turkey As Part of Their Broadcast Policy

## *Türkiye'deki Üniversite Radyolarının Yayın Politikaları Kapsamında İçerik Yapılanması*

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Received/Geliş tarihi: 31.03.2021

Revision Requested/Revizyon talebi: 12.04.2021

Last revision received/Son revizyon teslimi:  
21.10.2021

Accepted/Kabul tarihi: 21.10.2021

Citation/Atrf: Tufan, F., Kökat, S., Bal, Z.E., (2021). Content structure of university radio stations in Turkey as part of their broadcast policy. *Connectist: Istanbul University Journal of Communication Sciences*, 61, 213-240.  
<https://doi.org/10.26650/CONNECTIST2021-907123>

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine to what extent university radio stations in Turkey are an alternative to popular, commercial radio stations by analyzing the program content and general approaches within the framework of their music and program policies. Using the qualitative research method, in-depth interviews were carried out with the employees and representatives of 25 public and 9 foundation university radio stations across various regions and different cities of Turkey. Twenty university radio stations were examined on site by direct observations and face-to-face interviews, and we interviewed the representatives of 14 university radio stations via telephone or video communication. All interviewees were asked the same semistructured questions. Furthermore, the supervisors of the 11 sample radio stations who archive their programs regularly selected some of the programs and shared their archives with the researchers. These selected programs were analyzed in terms of the duration of talk and music, and categorized according to the production elements. It was found that university radio stations in Turkey have problems with content production for various reasons and are exposed to certain restrictions. Therefore, in contrast to international practices and the existing literature, they have content similar to that of commercial radio stations, rather than broadcasting alternative content.

**Keywords:** Radio, university radio stations, content structure, alternative broadcasting, community broadcasting

### ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki üniversite radyolarının müzik ve program politikaları çerçevesinde içerik ve yaklaşımlarının incelenmesi sonucunda ne boyutta alternatif radyo özelliği sergilediklerini saptamaya çalışmaktır. Nitel araştırma yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilen bu çalışma kapsamında, Türkiye'nin çeşitli bölgelerinden ve farklı şehirlerden 25 devlet üniversitesi ve 9 vakıf üniversitesine bağlı üniversite radyosunun sorumlu ve çalışanlarıyla derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yirmi üniversite radyosu yerinde incelenmiş, gözlem yapılarak değerlendirilmiş ve bu radyoların katılımcıları ile yüz yüze görüşme gerçekleştirilmişken, 14 üniversite radyosunun katılımcısı ile telefon ya da internet

aracılığıyla görüşülmüştür. Görüşülen tüm katılımcılara aynı yapılandırılmış sorular sorulmuştur. Bununla birlikte, örnekleme bulunan, arşiv programlarının kaydını düzenli olarak tutan ve bu program kayıtlarını araştırmacılarla paylaşmakta sakınca görmeyen 11 radyonun sorumluları tarafından seçilen bazı programları, söz, müzik ve içerik unsurları bakımından analize tabi tutulmuş ve yapım unsurlarına göre kategorize edilmiştir. Türkiye'deki

üniversite radyolarının pek çok gerekçe ile içerik üretimi konusunda sorunlar yaşadığı, üretiminin kısıtlandığı, uluslararası literatür ve uygulamalardan önemli oranda ayrılarak alternatif bir tavır benimsemek yerine yaygın, ticari radyoların içeriklerine benzer örnekler sergilediği tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Radyo, üniversite radyoları, içerik yapılanması, alternatif yayıncılık, topluluk yayıncılığı

## INTRODUCTION

Today's radio broadcasting content is frequently criticized worldwide, especially in academic circles. The focus of these criticisms lies in the structuring of radio content with a shift away from radio's traditional functions for economic reasons. As a result, the content presented to the audience mainly involves music and entertainment elements. In Turkey, a majority of radio stations ignore their historical function as providers of news and educational and cultural content and broadcast only music- and entertainment-oriented content. Even university radio stations in Turkey, which would be expected to exhibit alternative broadcasting approaches, have instead adopted popular approaches. Thus, determined efforts and applications are required to change the current situation.

In Turkey, the number of communication faculties started to increase considerably between 2000 and 2010, and even more rapidly after 2010, giving way to an increase in the number of university radio stations as well. Today, there are over 50 university radio stations in Turkey broadcasting terrestrially or over the internet only, and these stations, despite sharing some features in common, have different characteristics in many aspects of university radio broadcasting.

University radio stations are alternative radio broadcasting practices that are accepted as the third broadcasting model worldwide. These stations offer content that is an alternative to that offered by popular, commercial radio stations and are important due to their educational mission and their free, scientific, and democratic attitude. Based on the importance of university radio broadcasting, the aim of this study was to reveal the content structure of Turkey's university radio stations and to offer suggestions to strengthen the alternative aspect of these stations.

### **University Radio Stations And Content Structure**

The first examples of university radio stations date back to the early years of the discovery of radio technology and regular radio broadcasting. The struggle to establish and develop a radio station within a scientific and educational institution emphasizes its value and importance. In the first half of the 20th century, the adoption of such an effective and transformative means of mass communication by universities, which are regarded as centers of free and scientific thought, and the use of the radio for educational

purposes brought together students and educators, as well as large masses of people. On the other hand, radio functioned as a propaganda tool of the government during wartime and of the capital in the time of peace. With changing social structures and developing technology, the role and effectiveness of radio have changed; university radio stations developed different structures and continue to exist today.

Priestman (2002, pp. 20-25) positioned university radio stations, which he defined as the third-sector model of broadcasting, as media that offer content that is an alternative to public and commercial broadcasters and provide educational programs. University radio stations have educational and cultural missions. These radio stations are generally operated by university students, and their target audience is also university students. They are participatory radio stations, both conceptually and in practice, because they allow students to participate in production and management stages. This enables the development of students' public lives. University radio stations are compatible with community radio stations (Wallace, 2008, p. 44).

Throughout their existence, community radio stations have been in a constant struggle to differentiate themselves from the mainstream media. In this struggle, community broadcasters prioritize serving by meeting the expectations and social and cultural needs of the audience for which they are responsible, rather than trying to increase their income by reaching a wider audience, despite economic pressures. Considering the opinions regarding the general nature and responsibilities of university radio stations, it becomes clear that instead of showing characteristics similar to those of commercial and popular stations, these stations should differentiate themselves and undertake an alternative mission, just like community radio stations. Considering the practices around the world (Birowo, 2010; CBAA, 2021; Coccoli, 2014; Hedberg, 1986; Ibrahim & Mishra, 2016; Manyozo, 2007; Pérez-Alaejos, Martin Valiente, & Hernández-Prieto, 2016; Teixeira & Silva, 2009; Wall, 2007; Wilson-David, 2015), it can be seen that university radio stations mostly adopt alternative broadcasting missions.

As all school radio stations are student oriented and are at the center of educational processes, the community for which these radio stations are responsible is, of course, students and others in academic circles. Furthermore, the requirement that radio stations affiliated with universities, which are regarded as centers of free thought and science with a universal and democratic approach, should carry out their activities in an integrated manner with the participatory and democratic structure of alternative

broadcasting or community broadcasting is an important mission expected from these stations. However, as universities are educational institutions, the first and most basic approach adopted and implemented by university radio stations historically has been educational.

It does not seem possible to present a single definition of educational broadcasting, although this was one of the first reasons for the emergence of university radio stations. Both historical changes in broadcasting practices and the differences in practice between countries reveal different dimensions of educational broadcasting. Whereas educational broadcasting was positioned against commercial broadcasting and the process of its creation was difficult in the American broadcasting system of the 1930s, the British Broadcasting Corporation provides an example of various educational programs that were developed using the public service broadcasting approach. In the early years of the radio, educational broadcasting in many countries was carried out based on curriculum, whereas in the following years, didactic content based on curriculum was abandoned and different types of program content, such as interviews, drama programs, quality music, and news, were broadcast. On the other hand, educational broadcasting with formal educational content continued, especially in poor and underdeveloped countries with low literacy rates (Paulu, 1981).

In the early years of radio broadcasting in the United States, educational broadcasting sought to find a way to survive the pressures of commercial approaches. Whereas some circles claimed that educational radio stations could develop in cooperation with commercial stations, others stated that they should be organized in a completely independent form. As a result, educators preferred to shape educational radio stations by developing projects independent of commercial radio practices during those years (Sterling, 2009).

In a study conducted in 2007, the researcher found that radio stations at universities in the United States constituted 11% of all terrestrial broadcasting stations in the country, and these stations offered alternative content and assumed an alternative role outside of popular commercial radio's musical preferences, promoting the independent rock (indie rock) genre. The results of the research examining the musical content of three different university radio stations in Boston and New York over five years showed that these stations differed greatly from popular and commercial radio stations in terms of their musical preferences and that their alternative perspectives

were based on the development process of the sector after the 1920s (Wall, 2007). In another study conducted in the United States, 13 university radio consultants were asked for their opinions, and five important factors affecting university radio stations were determined. These factors were the decreasing prestige of college radio advising within the college and university communities, a decreasing amount of direct institutional financial support for college radio, an inexorable move toward digital production and transmission, the changing composition of students participating in college radio, and a continual reliance on locally produced alternative music and sports programming (Tremblay, 2003).

In Australia, which has a strong tradition of distance education, the radio was designed and supported by universities in its first years and reached hundreds of thousands of people for educational purposes with the "School of the Air" application. Toward the end of the 20th century, demand for and investment in distance education increased dramatically, encouraging many universities in Australia to show initiative (Evans, 1995). In the mid-1970s, many community and campus radio stations emerged in Australia, with the licensing opportunity granted by the government to enable educational institutions to conduct broadcasting activities (Hedberg, 1986), and radio became an inseparable part of Australian universities. Today, many university radio stations in Australia continue to broadcast as community radio, as well as having a guiding mission in the production of alternative content (CBAA, 2021).

A study on 22 university radio stations gathered under the umbrella of a union in Spain, where the first university radio stations were established in the 1940s, revealed that the main objective of these stations was to produce programs on culture, science, and technology within the framework of public service broadcasting (Pérez-Alaejos et al., 2016). In Portugal, on the other hand, university radio stations included events related to academic life at the university in their program schedule, broadcast cultural programs, and included alternative music (Teixeira & Silva, 2009). In Italy, where 41 university radio stations broadcast regularly in 2014, the main purpose of university radio stations operating under a union was to improve students' radio broadcasting skills with new technologies and reach the audience with new teaching techniques (Coccoli, 2014). In England, which has university radio stations run by student communities, these stations are considered to be a social acquisition that provides strong benefits to students' learning processes (Wilson-David, 2015).

Since its invention as a means of mass communication, the radio, which was originally used primarily to meet the needs of farmers and rural citizens in the agricultural field or teachers in the field of education for direct or complementary education in many countries, has also been used to disseminate foreign language education due to its auditory advantages. The radio's ability to reach challenging geographical regions both quickly and economically, its potential to eliminate inequality in education, and its pedagogical competence have been important factors in its preferability (Chandar & Sharma, 2003; Clyne, 2003; Hedberg & McNamara, 2002; Lambert, 1963; Naidoo & Potter, 2007; Nazari & Hasbullah, 2010; Potter & Naidoo, 2009; Tsuda & Lafaye, 2005; Wei, 2010). This potential of radio, which includes the public benefit, has been supported mainly by the initiatives of public broadcasters or universities.

The first radio broadcasting trial outside state radio broadcasting in Turkey was in 1946, again with a university initiative. Istanbul Technical University Radio, which was established by making use of the exceptional basis granted to educational institutions by law number 3222, is considered a starting point for university radio broadcasting (İlaslan, 2014). Following this initiative, the Istanbul University Faculty of Science Radio was established in 1951. The establishment objective of this radio station was to train personnel professionally who would work at radio stations. Even though the radio station's broadcast schedule included mostly musical content, news about the university and announcements of exam results were broadcast occasionally (Aziz, 1971, p. 124).

The first formal educational radio station in Turkey started offering educational support to elementary and secondary school students in 1962 (Altınkaynak, 1962), and more than 30 school radio stations affiliated with the National Ministry of Education were put into service before and after the establishment of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation. Aziz (1971, pp. 125-126) pointed out that even the Ministry had no knowledge of these numerous radio transmitters and that this broadcasting model was implemented unsystematically. These stations were also established for educational purposes, but there were no educational broadcasts in their content. Some of these stations, which mostly played music, broadcast news about students. The quality of their content was very poor because the broadcasts were under the supervision of the school administrations.

Regarding educational broadcasting and university radio stations, it would be pertinent to mention communication education and the faculties of communication, as well as

their role in journalism and radio-television broadcasting in Turkey. Communication education, which started within journalism schools in Turkey, has undergone major transformations and has evolved to the high school, institute, college, and finally university levels. Communication education, defined as a “problematic area” for many years, has made a constant effort to gain ground while within the bounds of media, capital, technology, and education policies. Communication education, in which schools in Istanbul and Ankara played a leading role at the beginning, continued to spread and differentiate later with the inclusion of universities in other cities such as Izmir, Eskişehir, Konya, Erzurum, and Elazığ. Although one of the aims of the first communication schools was to train professionals for the media, a rapidly increasing number of communication schools have structured their content at different levels in terms of practice and theory. Due to the unplanned increase in the number of communication schools, the current problematic situation in the media sector, and employment concerns of senior students, applied courses and practice units in the communication faculties have also increased rapidly but still remain insufficient (Arık & Bayram, 2011; Kükrer, 2011; Tokgöz, 2006; Uzun, 2007). The relatively low cost of radio installation and the enhancement of new digital transmission technologies offering new opportunities for broadcasting are important factors for establishing school radio stations, which have increased in parallel with the increase in the number of communication faculties, fine arts faculties, and vocational schools that provide communication education and that are established to meet the need for applied education.

## AIM AND METHODOLOGY

### Aim

The aim of this study was to determine to what extent university radio stations in Turkey differ from their international counterparts. The main question of this study is whether university radio stations in Turkey are alternative radio broadcasters.

To understand how university radio stations structure their content within the scope of their broadcasting policies and experiences in this process, the following research questions were prepared:

1. What are the preferences for the format and content of university radio stations in Turkey?



2. What are the problems faced by university radio stations in Turkey regarding content production?
3. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between university radio stations and commercial radio stations in Turkey in terms of content structuring?
4. Does university radio in Turkey display features of alternative or community radio broadcasting?
5. What are the efforts of university radio stations in Turkey regarding their educational and academic mission?

## Method

This research involved a qualitative analysis method based on descriptive research and in-depth interviews. Within the scope of the study, broadcasting policy, program types, musical preferences, organizational structure, technical-technological competencies, human resources, legal structuring forms, and the financial structures of each radio station were evaluated as independent variables that affect the quality of the station, and the effects of university setting on broadcast content were examined in this context. In-depth interviews were conducted face to face with the representatives of 20 university radio stations from 34 university stations in the sample, and via telephone or remote video with representatives of 14 university stations. 20 radio stations were observed on site.

In-depth interviews that enable qualitative analysis make it possible to collect data directly for the research purpose while promoting an exploratory inquiry with open-ended and semistructured questions. With this technique, the interviewer can analyze the respondents' opinions and perspectives in a deep and versatile way, illuminate the background of the ideas, and thus obtain a rich data set. The data are categorized, filtered, and interpreted according to the themes suitable for the research questions. Data obtained from interviews can be quoted directly or paraphrased indirectly (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Qualitative data collection techniques such as observation and interviews are considered highly reliable because they approach events, facts, perceptions, and trends in their natural environment in a realistic and comprehensive manner, and the flexible nature of these techniques strengthens the researcher's hand in terms of validity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, pp. 39, 256). However, because observations and interviews also reflect the views of the participants in the process, they present a rich perspective to the researcher (Newcomb & Lotz, 2002, p. 72).

To determine the general program production elements of 11 university radio stations from the sample, some of the program content broadcast by these stations were also analyzed according to their talk and musical elements. A descriptive analysis of the talk and musical elements of radio programs reveals the production elements of the programs and therefore the type of radio station (Aziz, 2007, pp. 67-68); such analysis revealed more rational results than did the statements to categorize the general structure of the stations.

The radio stations in the sample are encoded with the letters DR and VR (DR1-DR25; VR1-VR9). DR represents a state university radio station, and VR represents a foundation university station. To protect the identity of the stations and the participants, ellipses (...) are used where the name of the station or the participant was pronounced during interviews. For direct quotations from interviews, ellipses are used to indicate omitted materials (such as exclamations, repetitions, off-topic examples, etc.).

DR1-3, DR8-10, DR17-19, VR1, and VR8 were analyzed in terms of specific program content, duration of talk, and musical elements. Additionally, we categorized the content of these programs into program genres. Only the programs of the radio stations that archive their programs regularly and shared these archives with us were analyzed.

## FINDINGS

The findings are categorized according to the radio stations' musical preferences, program and broadcast policies, program formats, duration of talk and musical elements, and general problems during the production process.

### Musical Preferences

It was found that all university radio stations, except DR24, broadcast more than one music genre, adopting mixed musical preferences in their daily schedule. Unlike the other stations, DR6 and DR7 feature Sufi music and hymns.

Twenty-two radio stations (DR1, DR2, DR5, DR10, DR12, DR14-20, DR22, DR25, VR1-7, and VR9) broadcast Turkish and foreign music at different percentages in their schedule. Whereas DR1, DR3, DR9, DR11, DR17, DR18, DR20, and DR22 broadcast mainly Turkish music, and DR3, DR4, DR6, DR7, DR21, and VR8 broadcast only Turkish

music, DR8, DR16, DR19, DR25, VR1-4, and VR9 broadcast mainly foreign music, and DR23 and DR24 broadcast only foreign music. The DR23 participant stated the reason for not broadcasting Turkish music as “it is difficult to find high-quality recording[s]” of Turkish songs. The DR24 participant stated that the radio station has a strict foreign language music policy, and Turkish music is not broadcast even in the programs; the participant added that Turkish songs are excluded from the radio station’s copyright agreements.

Whereas DR1-3, DR9, DR11, DR13, DR15, DR17, DR18, DR21, VR1, and VR6-8 participants stated that they mainly broadcast pop or popular music, DR8, DR10, DR16, DR19, DR24, DR25, VR2, VR3, and VR9 participants stated that they prefer alternative musical genres. Indie music is the most broadcast musical genre in the alternative music category. Jazz, rock, blues and classical music are other music genres considered alternative. The DR25 participant stated that within the framework of the radio station’s musical preferences, they mainly broadcast jazz, blues, and classical music due to the low risk of facing copyright issues. The reason for broadcasting Turkish pop music is either the students’ tastes and preferences or the aim of reaching a wide target audience.

DR1-3, DR9, DR11, DR13-15, DR18, VR1, and VR3-7 participants emphasized that the preferences of students working for the radio station or the target audience affect the musical choices of the radio station. Although the head of a radio station decides the music played, the music director, the conservatory teacher, the entire radio team, and the senior management are among the other decision makers. The DR6 participant stated that they also consider the sensitivities of the local people for musical preferences, and the DR9 participant stated that when the station was first established, they surveyed 40,000 students, and 92.8% demanded Turkish pop music.

DR2, DR6, DR12-14, DR22, and VR4 participants stated that they have different sensitivities in their musical preferences, such as not playing arabesque music; Turkish protest music; songs with slang, obscenity, and abusive language; songs with political content; or music by singers with a political stance.

The radio stations that have a specific music policy are DR5, DR19, DR23, DR24, and VR2 (Figure 1).

## Program Policy

DR2, DR8, DR10, DR13, DR15, DR17, DR18, DR23, DR24, VR4, VR7, and VR9 participants stated that they broadcast mostly music (as opposed to talk programs) for various reasons, such as the criticism and intervention of management regarding talk programs, students' incapacity to produce and present such programs, students' reluctance regarding talk programs, faculties' insufficient support, the audience's disinterest in talk programs and demand for music, avoiding the risk of students' potential vulgar language, and program guests being generally from the music sector. The DR15 participant stated that they prefer broadcasting mostly music because of positive feedback they receive from their audience and emphasized this decision by saying, "Our station is, inevitably, a jukebox, but at least it is a good one." The DR24 participant pointed out the problems they face in regular content production as follows:

It is more difficult to do this on the radio [talk programs in different subjects and genres]. We also want regularity. When we receive a program proposal, will the student be able to do this during a broadcast season? And what would it be like? We want a weekly program topic list. At that stage, there may be some proposals that are not accepted . . . at least we want it to last for a term.

DR1, DR9, DR13, DR18, VR3, and VR5-7 participants stated that they also broadcast entertainment and comedy programs with random conversations. They added that the students are eager to produce and present such programs and that the audience demands them.

DR2, DR6, DR9, DR12, DR16, DR22, and VR1 participants emphasized that they care about content that includes information, university news, and promotion of the university and that they include such content in their broadcast schedule.

DR1, DR17, DR19, DR20, VR1, and VR9 participants emphasized that they care about students' preferences and expectations for the program topics. The DR17 participant stated,

This is the radio station of young minds and we want to reflect their imagination. Most of them are young people who love music, the ones who apply to us. We try to keep up with their dreams and the contents are exactly the way they imagine

... The student should express himself/herself properly and realize something he/she believes. It may seem so simple. We really care about that individual, the person who is on the microphone. We also had students here who read fairy tales. You might think it's very simple, but in fact, it is not like that at all.

DR14, DR19, DR21, DR22, DR25, and VR8 participants emphasized the importance of talk programs, whereas DR4, DR12, DR16, DR22, and DR25 participants drew attention to the importance of public service broadcasting policy for their programs.

DR3, DR5, DR7, DR11, VR5, and VR6 participants stated that they cannot broadcast any program on their radio station due to various reasons such as spatial problems, possible risks, and the lack of technical equipment, human resources, and motivation. DR11 broadcasts programs, but the students produce demo programs for their courses.

DR6, DR9, VR2, and VR6 participants expressed that they have some sensitivities regarding their program policy, such as having a nationalist perspective, not broadcasting news, and avoiding political and social issues.

Whereas DR21 broadcasts only prerecorded programs, DR6 is the only station that broadcasts outsourced programs, and these outnumber the in-house productions. DR22 pays attention the most to city events and news. Many radio stations in the sample have insufficient sources for program production. VR7 is the only exception (Figure 2 and 3).

### **Format and Approaches Concerning General Publication Policy**

It was found that the majority of university radio stations primarily function as practice units for students' broadcasting education. DR1-4, DR7, DR9, DR11, DR12, DR15-17, DR19, DR20, DR23-25, VR1, VR2, VR4, and VR6 participants emphasized this aspect of the stations.

Regarding the musical and program elements of their content, DR1, DR9, DR11, DR14, DR17, DR21, VR1, VR6-9 participants consider their radio stations "popular," whereas DR1, DR2, DR9, DR10, DR13, DR17, DR18, VR2, VR4, and VR6 participants emphasized that they especially avoid political issues. DR4, DR8, DR12, DR14, DR16, DR20-22, DR25, and VR2 participants stated that they broadcast for the benefit of their audience, emphasizing public service broadcasting.

DR9-11, DR16, DR17, DR20, DR23, DR24, and VR7 participants emphasized the predominance of the musical element in their content, and a few participants emphasized the importance of keeping the presenter announcements especially short.

DR10, DR15, DR16, DR19, DR23, DR24, VR2, and VR3 are trying to be alternative radio stations musically. The VR2 participant expressed that VR2 is

an alternative radio station. Because we broadcast some programs that would never be produced in the mainstream media and would not be approved due to advertising concerns. It can be considered as alternative radio. We can absolutely say that it is a public service broadcaster. We also . . . the university owes the city. It has to serve the city. We give back to the city because we announce theater plays and news that would not even be announced in the mainstream media.

DR2, DR4, DR12, DR16, DR17, DR19, and VR2 participants emphasized the academic aspect of their content, referring to the academicians guests of the radio shows or the content produced by academic staff. DR16 is the only radio station that has the characteristics of an educational station with its academic content. DR16 is also a means of distance education.

DR3, DR5, DR7, DR8, DR11, VR5, and VR6 are the radio stations that broadcast only music and music programs.

Whereas DR1, DR4, DR21, VR3, and VR4 participants particularly emphasized that they avoid using vulgar language in the programs, the VR3 participant complained that they cannot always prevent programmers from using such language, even if they take precautions in this regard.

DR16, DR24, VR1, and VR3 participants considered their radio stations community radio. Whereas DR16 is considered community radio based on its content and way of producing such content, other stations are considered student community radio, due to the stations' student clubs.

Whereas the DR6 participant emphasized religious and national sensitivities in broadcasting, DR2 does not broadcast certain music genres and singers banned by the decision of the university senate. The DR23 participant stated that they prioritize

the interests of the university as a university radio station, whereas the DR9 participant considers the radio station and its broadcasting format “infotainment,” a term that combines both information and entertainment (Figure 4).

### **Analysis of Program Content According to Talk, Music, and Other Elements**

The talk and musical elements of some programs of the radio stations in the sample were analyzed in terms of the duration, and the content of these programs were categorized into genres. The programs that were analyzed were selected by DR1-3, DR8-10, DR17-19, VR1, and VR8 participants. Two researchers carried out the analysis and obtained the results with a difference of 16 seconds for the talk duration and 24 seconds for the duration of the music. That difference, 40 seconds, corresponds to 0.02% of the total duration of all programs and has no significant effect on the analysis.

It was found that the DR1, DR9, DR17, DR19, VR1, and VR8 programs include more talk elements, whereas the DR2, DR3, DR8, DR10, and DR18 programs include more music. In terms of the cumulative total of talk and music elements, the talk element amounts to 51.43%, whereas the music element constitutes 48.59% (Table 1).

Twenty-one programs have music-oriented topics; 18 programs have various topics and subtopics such as culture, art, science, and news; seven programs have nonspecific topics such as drive-time programs of commercial radio; and six programs have university and academia-related or student-oriented topics.

Although the data obtained from the analysis of the program contents show that they have more talk elements than music, the music-oriented and nonspecific daily topic programs outnumber those with topics such as culture, arts, science, academia, technology, history, literature, and so on (Table 2).

### **Content Production Issues/Problems**

The majority of radio stations face similar problems regarding content creation and programs. The most important problem that affects content production negatively is the students’ eagerness to produce programs with popular topics and music, similar to those on commercial radio, avoiding alternative talk programs. Participants complained that the students do not want to improve their skills in broadcasting, emphasizing their lack of effort.

The DR4 participant stated,

Even the students who begin with quality content, after a week or two, shift to popular ones as it takes hard work and they find it difficult to do research. To produce educational and informational content, it is necessary to research the weekly topics, read some resources, or learn certain concepts thoroughly. To maintain such process is difficult for a student after a few weeks, the easiest way is to produce popular content, and the request to shift to a program based on random talk is communicated to the unit manager.

Other important problems voiced are the students' disinterest in radio broadcasting, inadequacy in radio broadcasting, and lack of discipline regarding their programs. The majority of the participants stated that the students do not care enough about radio, that they are inconsistent about continuing their programs even though they are initially interested, and that they do not have the necessary qualifications for broadcasting.

DR5, DR14, and DR19 participants stated that broadcasting only on the web causes a lack of motivation for all employees and affects content production.

The DR5 participant explained the loss of motivation as follows:

FM broadcasting . . . motivation . . . When a student sees 50 listeners online, he/she would be prone to choose the songs of his/her taste, and he/she plays the songs he/she wants. That's when the quality of the content decreases. It's not that we haven't tried it, we've tried it. After that, I said . . . you know . . . we also produce serious content . . . We tell a student that we will make a program about Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca . . . we play the recordings of his poems and so on. If we ask someone about his poems, they only know one or two of them, nothing more. Let's give details about his poems and life story, not just recite. But, when you produce such content, that would be difficult for the students. Having only those fifty listeners exhausts that student. But anyway, we did it for two or three years on the webcast. After that, when I saw that quality started to decrease, I said, "There is no need." Let's just play music on the radio . . . I can't consider this as radio broadcasting.



The VR3 participant stated that the most important problem faced during the content production is the use of vulgar language, especially at night. The participant also stated that as it is a web radio station and they consider it a realm of freedom, they do not have a restrictive policy.

The VR2 participant described the problem they face as follows:

We inevitably repeat ourselves in creating content. Technical facilities, for example, no phone calls from our listeners. When we say, "Let's brighten up the shows and get a phone call," we can't do that because there is no phone connection! Thus, the content would be almost the same every time. Years pass, new students enroll, but they come up with similar content proposals. They are very impressed by TV and YouTube. They want to do something similar, but it doesn't fit the radio. We are facing an adaptation problem to the radio.

Another problem emphasized by the participants is that program broadcasting is sometimes irregular due to exam periods and holidays, as well as the students' responsibilities outside the radio, which causes instability. Furthermore, as the radio staff consists of students, working with newly enrolled students after the experienced students have graduated is a challenge in content production. The distance from the radio station to the main campus and the disinterest of academicians in radio were also voiced regarding content production. Participants also stated that the current political atmosphere of the country oppresses the staff, which causes a loss of motivation. Having students as decision makers at a radio station can sometimes affect content production negatively (Figure 5).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As an alternative broadcasting model, university radio stations have been broadcasting for many years around the world, primarily for university students and staff, but also for various communities or audiences. University radio is considered the third model of broadcasting, like community broadcasting (Priestman, 2002). It is an important alternative to public broadcasting and commercial broadcasting. These radio stations differ from local or regional radio stations in terms of ownership, content elements, staff organization, and purposes.

The aim of this study was to reveal the general features, experiences, potential, and problems of university radio stations that date back to the early years of radio broadcasting and that represent a culture and tradition, as well as to offer suggestions for improving the effectiveness of university radio stations in Turkey. In this context, face-to-face or remote in-depth interviews with the representatives of 34 university radio stations from various cities in Turkey were conducted. The data are supported with content analysis of 11 radio stations' programs.

It was found that all university radio stations in the sample, except one, adopt a flexible music policy. The musical preferences of the radio stations reflect a mixed approach regarding the tastes and expectations of students and local people, rather than a thematic choice. Although some radio stations broadcast a certain musical genre between airtimes of the programs on their schedule, these stations adopt a flexible music policy according to the students' tastes and expectations. Although most of the radio stations broadcast both Turkish and foreign music genres, the majority broadcast foreign music more. However, those that only broadcast Turkish music outnumber the ones that only broadcast foreign music.

The radio stations that broadcast popular music outnumber those that broadcast alternative music, such as local and indie music, in particular, jazz, rock, blues, classical music, and so on. A small number of university radio stations tend to broadcast alternative music, but the majority prefer broadcasting popular music to meet the demands of young listeners and local people. The trend of broadcasting popular music is more prominent in terrestrial radio stations. University radio stations in Turkey differ from the world's university radio stations in that matter (Wall, 2007).

University radio stations also have some explicit or implicit criteria for their musical preferences, and they avoid broadcasting certain musical genres and songs. Many stations avoid broadcasting arabesque and Turkish protest music, songs with vulgar language, songs with political content, or music by singers with a political stance.

Music is the focus of most of the university radio station programs (Wall, 2007; Laor, 2020). Many participants stated that they produce and broadcast music-oriented programs, voluntarily or necessarily. The reasons some radio stations intentionally implement program policies with a focus on music are the demand of the target audience for music, having more students in charge of production, or ensuring the

continuity of production. The radio stations that mostly broadcast music due to necessity are greater in number and have several reasons. They avoid broadcasting programs with specific topics (except for music and entertainment-oriented content) due to the risk of criticism and management intervention. Participants who cooperate with students for content production stated that they avoid taking risks due to the current political atmosphere of the country. Students' inadequacy to produce and present a talk program, students' disinterest in such programs, lack of support from the Faculty of Communication and academicians for content production, and the common strong belief in listeners' disinterest in talk programs are other reasons put forward for choosing music-oriented programs as a necessity.

Similar reasons were articulated for the radio stations that do not produce and broadcast any program except for the music on their playlists. They stated that they have no motivation to produce talk programs, that they have a limited number of employees, that they do not want to take risks, that their technical equipment is insufficient, and that they face problems related to the physical conditions of school premises.

There are mostly students in charge of the production of radio stations that broadcast talk and music-oriented programs regularly, except for DR8. The support given by academic staff to content production is considered insufficient, and only in a small number of radio stations do academic and administrative staff produce and present programs. Academicians prefer to be guests to talk about their field of expertise. However, as many participants stated, the number of academicians who make this contribution is very low (Sauls, 1997).

University radio stations produce programs with specific topics such as cinema, sports, communication, literature, culture, art, health, social media, and technology, though in limited number. University content or information about and news from the university is considered important. A small number of university radio participants emphasized the importance of public service broadcasting and alternative broadcasting.

University radio stations have some explicit or implicit criteria for the programs they broadcast, as with their music policy. These stations avoid broadcasting news and programs involving political issues.

It was found that most of these radio stations are primarily considered “student practice laboratories” or “studios for vocational education.” Only one radio station is used as a means of distance education; other radio stations have insufficient capacity and hesitate to broadcast as educational stations.

Few university radio stations broadcast academic content. Participants of 11 stations in the sample emphasized that their stations are part of popular culture and defined them as “popular radio” due to their content. Participants of nine radio stations emphasized that the announcements should be kept short, as on commercial radio. Four radio stations are considered community stations, one due to its approach to production and content; others are considered “student community radio” due to their student clubs.

Whereas one radio station has religious and national sensitivities, another radio station adopts a broadcasting approach that prioritizes the interests and benefits of the university.

The duration of talk and music elements of 52 programs from 11 stations was analyzed, and these programs were categorized into genres. Even though a slight difference between the percentage of talk and music elements was found, considering the general content of the programs, music-oriented and entertainment programs with nonspecific topics outnumber other programs. Only the programs of the radio stations that archive their programs regularly and shared these archives with us were analyzed. Therefore, it is clear that deductions for the content analysis of the programs would require more objective criteria.

Participants from stations that do not have terrestrial broadcasting stated that the obligation to broadcast only over the internet causes a loss of motivation in the whole team, which can cause some technical problems. The disinterest of communication students in broadcasting and their inadequacy in content production and its negative effect on continuous broadcasting of the radio station were constantly articulated.

University management’s frequent intervention and criticism of the content, as well as imposing content on the broadcast schedule, limit the autonomy of the radio stations and interrupt their operations as student practice units.

Some participants stated that students are unwilling to and incapable of producing talk programs. Students mostly want to produce and present programs that do not require prior research, such as entertainment programs, which hinders the production of such talk programs.

Some radio stations produce content with difficulty due to lack of resources (Tremblay, 2003; Raymond, 2016), but even the ones that produce programs regularly face many problems. The most common problem is students' demand to produce and present programs similar to those on commercial radio stations. Students insist on reproducing popular content. The radio broadcasting practices of the country and the low number of alternative radio stations also shape the students' tastes and demands, which affects university radio stations. As the participants stated, students find it easy to produce and present music-entertainment programs rather than talk programs that require research and effort. This poses an obstacle to producing alternative content. The expectation of quality broadcast content results in students' disinterest in radio broadcasting. Participants mostly attributed the problems related to content production to students.

Participants stated that the problems they face regarding dissatisfactory content production levels are due to students' disinterest in radio broadcasting, their inadequacy, and their lack of discipline, students leaving the radio station after graduation, and their responsibilities outside radio. Participants from the radio stations that only broadcast on the internet expressed unwillingness to produce content and lack of motivation for broadcasting. The current political atmosphere of the country puts pressure on both administrators and students, which results in a lack of motivation. The distance of the radio stations from the city center and the disinterest of academicians in radio broadcasting were also considered reasons for insufficient and less satisfactory content production.

University radio stations have the potential to produce content on education, science, and arts with the support of the institution they are affiliated with (Miller, 2013); however, it was found that a small number of radio stations benefit from these opportunities. These stations should differ from commercial radio stations. As university radio stations are affiliated with an educational institution and are not profit oriented, producing content and broadcasting music similar to commercial radio stations is contrary to the primary motive of these stations. For this reason, university radio stations

adopt an alternative broadcasting approach around the world. The majority of university radio stations in Turkey have a keen interest in and tendency toward popular content, which cannot be ignored. Although the university radio stations that have the role of being a school of broadcasting, emphasized often by the participants, are expected to guide the radio broadcasting industry and students in their practices, many of the stations have been influenced by commercial radio stations and the tastes and demands of students who listen to these commercial stations.

Consequently, efforts should be made to provide autonomy to university radio stations by structuring them as part of alternative broadcasting and adopting approaches of community broadcasting, local broadcasting, and public broadcasting service with the cooperation and support of students, academia, and media professionals. Cooperation between the academy and the radio is an issue that is also considered important by education experts all over the world. It is no coincidence that university radio stations are role models that function as community radio stations with an educational approach in developed countries. Collaboration between academicians and university researchers with university radio stations would make radio and outcomes more effective and efficient.

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**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

**Grant Support:** This study was supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), Project No: 119K088. We appreciate the support given by the TUBITAK to our project entitled "All Aspects of University Radio Broadcasting in Turkey: Situation Analysis on Opportunities and Challenges" (Project Number: 119K088).

**Author Contributions:** Conception/Design of study: F.T.; Data Acquisition: F.T., S.K., Z.E.B.; Data Analysis/Interpretation: F.T.; Drafting Manuscript: F.T., S.K., Z.E.B.; Critical Revision of Manuscript: F.T., S.K.; Final Approval and Accountability: F.T., S.K., Z.E.B.

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## TABLES AND FIGURES

**Table 1:** Analysis of Program Contents According to Talk, Music, and Other Elements: Cumulative Results

Number of radio stations	Number of programs	Total Duration	Total Duration of Talk Element	Total Duration of Music Element	Percentage (%)
11	52	50:22:00	25:54:16	24:28:24	Talk: 51.43 (~) Music: 48.59 (~)

**Table 2:** Analysis of Program Contents According to Talk, Music, and Other Elements

Radio Stations	Number of programs	Approximate duration of talk element %	Non-specific daily topic programs (Entertainment)	University and/or Academia related programs	Specific topic programs (Culture, art, science, news etc.)	Music and music-oriented programs (Singers, songs, music genres etc.)
DR1	5	65,68	1	1	3	-
DR2	4	43,74	-	1	-	3
DR3	5	41,97	-	-	1	4
DR8	4	8,65	-	-	-	4
DR9	7	46,98	-	1	4	2
DR10	5	23,50	-	-	1	4
DR17	5	61,38	2	2	1	-
DR18	5	29,97	2	-	-	3
DR19	4	94,40	-	-	4	-
VR1	3	71,92	-	1	1	1
VR8	5	78,76	2	-	3	-
Total	52	51,43	7	6	18	21

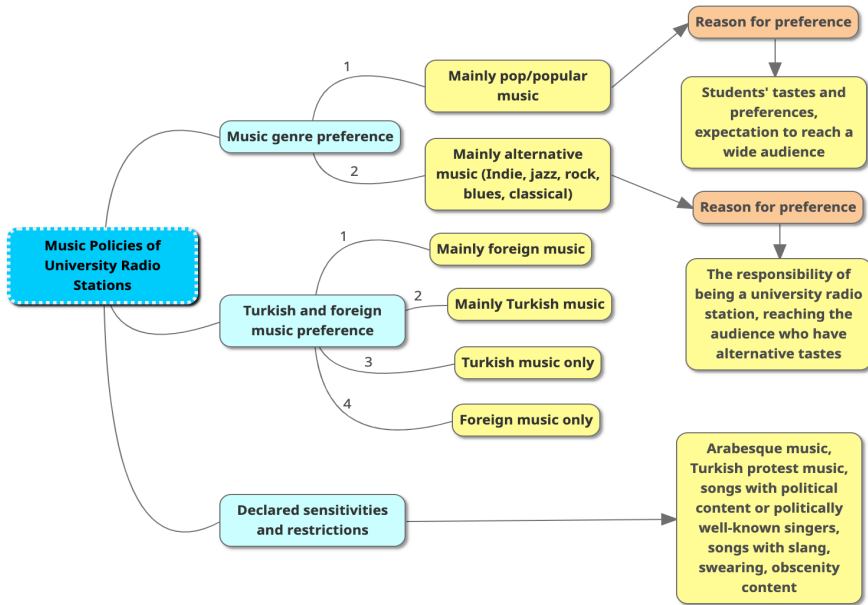


Figure 1: Music Policies of University Radio Stations

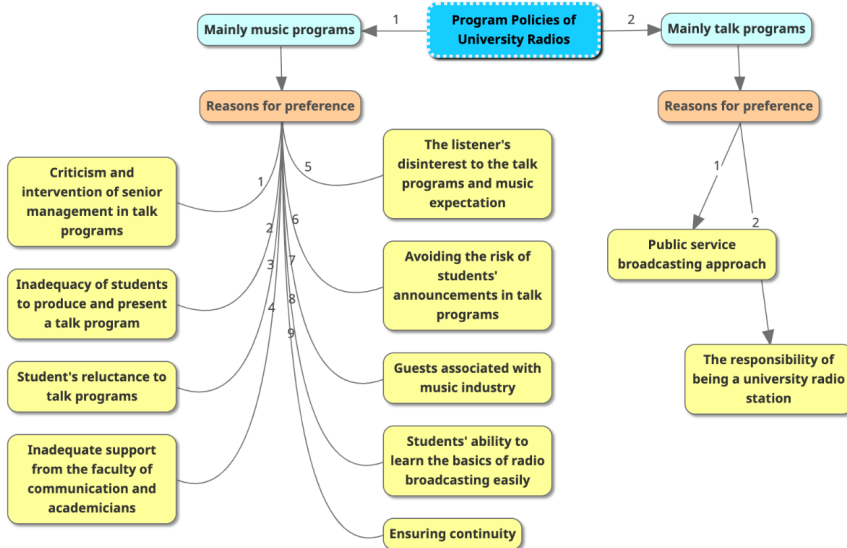


Figure 2: Program Policies of University Radio Stations 1

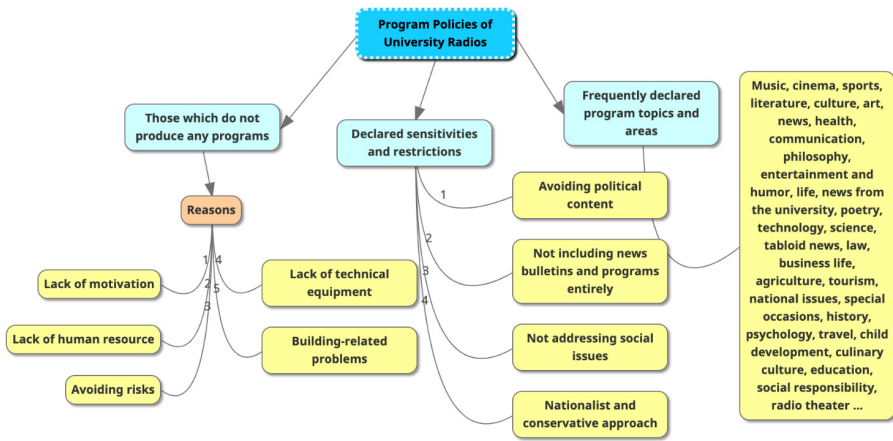


Figure 3: Program Policies of University Radio Stations 2

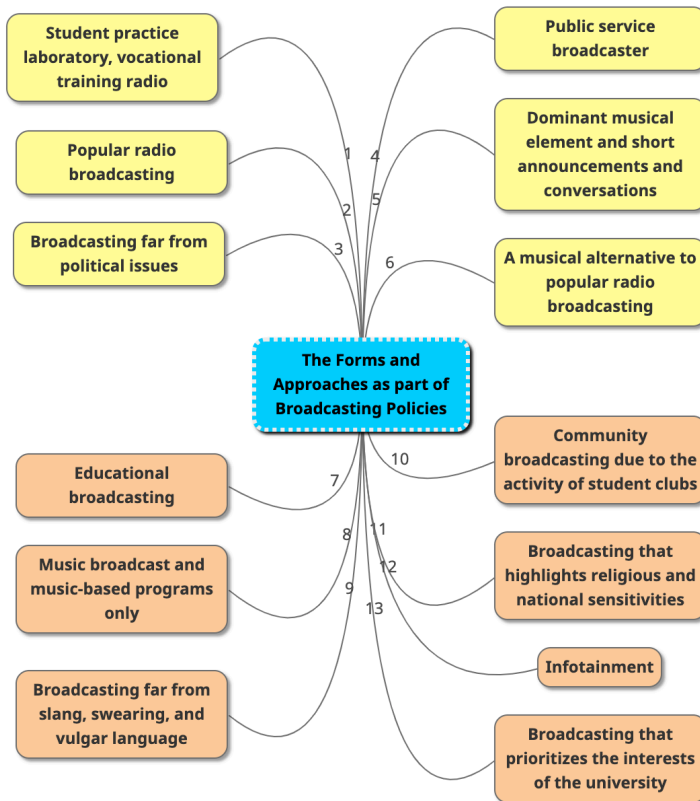


Figure 4: The Forms and Approaches as Part of Broadcasting Policies

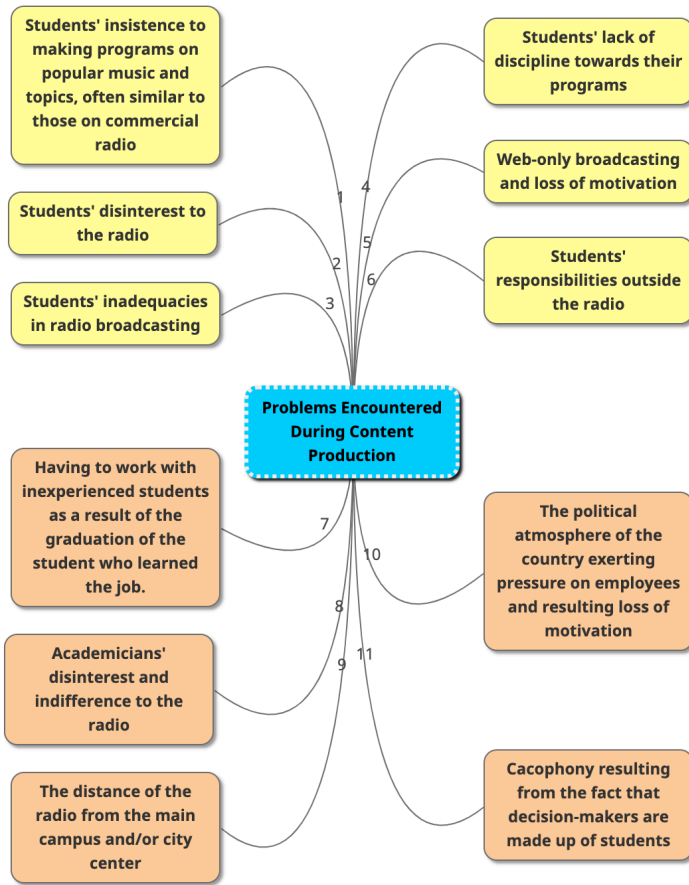


Figure 5: Problems Encountered During Content Production