RESEARCH ARTICLE /ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Uluslararası üniversite öğrencilerinin pandemi süreci

The pandemic process of international university students

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Öz

Covid-19 salgını bireylerin fiziksel ve ruhsal sağlığı için ciddi tehditlere neden olmuş depresyon gibi birçok psikolojik sorunlara da yol açmıştır. Salgın sırasında üniversitelerin eğitime ara vermesi ve yurtdışına çıkış yasağının getirilmesiyle birlikte uluslararası öğrenciler bu süreci ailelerinden uzakta eğitim gördükleri ülkede geçirmek zorunda kalmışlardır. Üniversite öğrencilerinin duygu durumları ile akademik endişelerinin ele alındığı bu çalışmada öğrencilere sunulan sosyal destekler ve üniversitelerde verilen uzaktan eğitimlerin yaşam kalitelerine yansımaları ve etkileri üzerinde durulmuş olup çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda 30 farklı ülkeden çalışmaya katılan 360 uluslararası öğrenci Covid-19 sürecinde eğitime ara verilmesini önemli bir karar olarak değerlendirirken, aktif eğitime ara verilmesinin kendilerini olumsuz etkilediğini (r=0,197**), uzaktan eğitimde karşılaştıkları en önemli problemin "Eğitim aldıkları dil eğitimi" (r=0,247**; r=0,354**) olduğunu ve bu problemin gelecekteki eğitim hayatlarında sorun teşkil edebileceğini (r=-0,152**), "korku", "endişe" ve "çaresizlik" gibi olumsuz duyguların farklı din, dil ve ırktan öğrencileri birbirlerine daha çok yakınlaştırdığını ifade etmişlerdir. Çalışmada uluslararası öğrencilere yapılan sosyal desteklerin ne denli önemli olduğu ve küresel felaketlerin çeşitli öğretilerden oluştuğu sonucuna varılmış olup uzaktan eğitim sürecinde verilen değer odaklı eğitimler öğrencilerin hem eğitim sürecine hem de yaşam biçimlerine çeşitli kazanımlar kattığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Covid-19, uluslararası öğrenci, yükseköğrenim, psikoloji, sosyal eşitlik*

Abstract

The Covid-19 outbreak has caused serious threats to the physical and mental health of individuals, and has caused many psychological problems such as depression. During pandemic associated shutdown of universities and travel restrictions on going abroad, international students had to spend this process in a foreign country where they were educated, away from their families. In this study, emotional states (moods) and academic concerns of university students were examined. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the reflections and effects of social supports offered to students and distance education provided at universities on their quality of life using qualitative research method. 360 international students who participated in the study from 30 different countries considered the interruption of education during the Covid-19 process as an important decision. The findings of the study are as follows: The interruption of face-to-face instruction (in-person learning) affected them negatively (r = 0.197 **), the most important problem they encountered in distance education was "the language of instruction education"

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(r = 0.247 **; r = 0.354 **) and this might pose problems in their future university life as well (r = -0.152 **). They also stated that negative feelings such as "fear", "anxiety" and "helplessness" brought students from different religions, languages and races closer to each other. In conclusion, the significant importance of social supports/aids for international students and various teachings of global catastrophes were revealed in the study. In addition, as a result of value-oriented distance education during the epidemic, it was determined that students have gained various gains in both the education process and their lifestyles.

1. INTRODUCTION

Immediately after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared SARS - CoV - 2 a pandemic on March 12, 2020, this new coronavirus (COVID-2019), especially in China (Duan and Zhu 2020:301, WHO, 2020:1) it spread rapidly in many other countries, causing an international acute infectious pneumonia epidemic (Bao et al., 2020:E37). With the Covid-19 outbreak, a global public health solidarity was initiated to slow the spread of the virus by applying certain measures (hand washing, not touching the eyes, maintaining physical distance, etc.) (Van Bavel et al., 2020:465, Honey-Roses et al., 2020:1) The psychological effects on the public, healthcare personnel, children and elderly groups, which are most affected by epidemics, have started to be questioned (Chen et al., 2020:E15, Yang et al., 2020:e19, Li et al., 2020:490). Undoubtedly, this disease has affected both the physical and psychological health of individuals (Ekiz et al., 2020:145). With the disease, nearly half of the world's population was asked to stay at home and restrict their individual mobility in public spaces (Stanford, 2020:1). The fact that there are very few scientific studies published in the field of social sciences related to the current pandemic process has directed the attention of scientists to this topic. Since the crisis has created large-scale behavioral changes in individuals, it has been tried to support the process by the suggestions of epidemiologists and public health experts, together (along) with the opinions obtained from social and behavioral scientists.

The first (one) of the central emotional reactions felt in a pandemic process is fear. Human beings, just like animals, have a set of defense systems to combat ecological threats (Cole et al., 2013:36, Duan and Zhu, 2020:301 Honey-Roses et al., 2020:1, Xiao, 2020:175), and the feeling of fear stemming from threats and rapidly spreading in society (Chen et al., 2020:E15) was thus felt more closely (Yang et al., 2020:e19). During this period, some people may behave more selfishly, while those who are particularly vulnerable have experienced more distress (Bavel, 2020:29). This great epidemic, felt on an international scale, had negative effects on societies as well as individuals. In order to eliminate negative effects, risk factors were encountered primarily on the basis of individuals causing psychological problems such as poor mental health, grief, harming themselves or family members, life-threatening adverse situations, panic, staying away from the family and low household income (Kun et. al., 2009:1138). These risks are interpreted as the extraordinary sacrifices of people in emergencies and disasters (Drury, 2020:62), with collaborations and norms of regular behavior. With Covid-19, existing inequalities have worsened (Kluth, 2020:1), and individuals in minorities, homeless and poor neighborhoods have started to feel more restricted access to health services and difficulty in self-isolation (Du et al., 2020:1).

All pandemics, including Covid-19, have a great test and teaching feature for humanity. This situation does not only include administrators, the science world and the health system, but also concerns all individuals (Aslan, 2020:39). Although the policymakers who closed the schools during the Covid-19 process knew how important other measures and social distancing measures were, the mortality rates were affected by 2-4% with the closure of educational institutions (Lancker and Parolin, 2020:E243). Politicians could not foresee that school closures would be less effective than social distancing interventions (Viner et. al., 2020:398). In fact, the decision to close schools was taken on the basis of evidence and assumptions that outbreaks reduce social contact between students and interrupt the risk of transmission (Jackson et. al., 2016:648). The closure of schools, which has been implemented as one of the social distancing measures, has been considered as an effective method in delaying the severity of the epidemic and its peak (Prem et. al., 2020:1). Lazzerini et. al. (2020:e11) also emphasized that with the closure of schools and sports activities in Italy as of March 1, the number of acute infections and traumas among children has been lower than normal, and even the number of children with Covid-19 disease has decreased.

During the pandemic process, the social support provided by humanitarian aid associations supported

the feelings of optimism in individuals by balancing the extreme anxiety and horror of the individuals (Van Bavel et. al., 2020:468). By preserving this fine line between individuals' optimism and excessive anxiety, individuals have also been made to feel safe. Considering that emotions direct the risk perception, this situation affects individuals more than accessing real information (Slovic et. al. 2004:316, Le Doux 2012:657). As observed both in history and in contemporary experiences of discrimination, there is distrust in racial and ethnic minority communities (Golberstein, 2020:E1). These communities feel the need to partner with trusted organizations around them.

The study conducted by Chen et al. in universities in 2020 showed that strict isolation measures taken in epidemic diseases and the risk of spreading the disease seriously affect the mental health of university students (Chen et. al., 2020:E15). Living in urban areas with parents, having a regular family income are the most important factors that protect university students from anxiety during the COVID-19 outbreak (Cao et. al., 2020:112934). Similarly, with the closure of some local businesses, part-time working students losing their jobs and worrying about the job market they intend to enter in the future have shown that university students are more vulnerable than they thought, and even need to overcome academic and financial difficulties (Lee, 2020:P421).

In order to create professional identity in students who receive applied basic education, internship practices are necessary as well as course applications (Rose, 2020:2131). Distance education provides an individual and collaborative working environment independent of many variables by establishing active communication between academicians and students living in different places (Çakın and Akyavuz Külekçi, 2020:173). Unlike summer vacations, the current school closure situation widen the learning gap between children of low-income and high-income families with learning digital environment (Lancker and Parolin, 2020:E243). As well as meeting the learning needs of students, their urgent nutritional needs should also be met by policy makers, school administrators and other local organizations. Universities that integrate innovative solutions into their educational and training programs using technology (Chick et. al., 2020:730) will prevent future educational deficiencies that may arise in the future (Zaharah et. al., 2020:273).

During the epidemic process, universities and academicians have made great efforts in distance education and organized quickly over the internet. Although the education process in this virtual environment is a new practice in many parts of our country, the education have been well organized. Although this interval, which is mandatory in the active education process, alleviates the concerns about distance education, international students, like each individual, have faced many uncertainties. Because while the long-term school closure and house arrest during the epidemic had negative effects on the physical and mental health of young people, some positive gains were achieved in this process. The current study was aimed to examine the experiences and moods of the international university students who received (distance) education and went through the Covid-19 process in Turkey.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2. 1. Material

This study was conducted by using qualitative research methodology and research was structured on two main research questions.

1. *How did international students studying in Turkey go through the Covid-19 process?*

2. *What are the social supports/aid for international students studying outside Turkey during the Covid-19 process in Turkey?*

2. 2. Data Collection and Evaluation in Research

The population of the study consists of international students studying in different countries around the world during the COVID-19 process and was selected with the appropriate sampling method. In the first phase of this study, which evaluated the educational process and social supports of international students studying in Turkey, 178 thousand international students studying in Turkey in the 2019-2020 academic year were tried to be reached through UDEF (International Student Association Federation). International Student Association Federation (UDEF) is an umbrella organization of 57 international student associations established to host 114 thousand international students from 203 countries who preferred to receive university education in Turkey. UDEF's mission is to get to know them, to make them socialize with each other, to help them meet their all needs in their educational life, to enable them to carry the experiences they had in our country to different geographies. This organization provides services to meet the needs of international students by constantly

informing them about their activities since the day they started their education. For this reason, technical support has been received from UDEF in order to carry out the study quickly and systematically.

Social support and distance education offered to international students studying in Turkey during the Covid-19 process were questioned through the questionnaire study and interviews in digital environment. In order to better understand the psychological state of international students, the questions of the applied questionnaire were prepared by interviewing 3 expert psychologists. The prepared questionnaire questions were evaluated after being approved by the "Social and Humanities Ethics Committee Evaluation Report". In this context, the questions directed to the participants are discussed in Tables 1 and 2 (20/06 / 2020-29 / 06/2020). The surveys were conducted by interviewing 360 international students from 30 different countries electronically (since the Covid-19 process is ongoing). International students participating in the survey are from 29 different countries (1.1% Afghanistan, 11.1% Azerbaijan, 0.5% China, 6.3% Indonesia, 0.5% Ivory, 0.5% Palestine, 0.5% Ghana, 0.5% South Sudan, 3.3% Georgia, 1.6% Iraq, 2.2% Iran, 0.5% Kazakhstan, 0.5% Kosovo, 1.1% Lebanon, 0.2% Malawi, 1.1% Egypt 0.5% Myanmar, 0.5% Nigeria, 0.5% Central Africa, 1.1% Uzbekistan, 1.6% Russia, 0.5% Senegal, 2.7% Somalia, 15% Syrian, 0% 5% Thai, 10.2% Turkmenistan, 0.5% Uganda, 3.3% from Jordan and 12.7% from Yemen). 25.6% of them maintain their lives with family support, 54.24% with the scholarship they receive from their country, % 15.6% by working, 5.1% both by family support and by working. 12.9% of them have been receiving university education in Turkey for 1 year, 19.4% for 2 years, 22.7% for 3 years, 30.5% for 4 years, 7.4% for 5 years and 7.1% for 6 years and above. In addition, 10 international students studying outside Turkey from 5 different countries were interviewed on social support in Turkey.

Correlation analysis was performed on the data obtained, spearman coefficients (r) and degrees of importance were determined, and the data obtained from the questionnaires were tabulated using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 16.01 package program in the statistical analysis. The answers given by the participants to the questions were evaluated using the% analysis method.

Table 1.

Social Support and Education Process of International University Students Studying in Turkey during COVİD-19

	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e	2f	2g	2h	2i	2j	2k
1a	,059	*,263***	b	*,115*	*,294***	b	*,354***	b	,060	,050	-,017	b	*,116*
1b		,098	b	,020	,069	b	-,040	b	,024	,066	-,011	b	*-,164***
1c			b	*-,114*	*,131*	b	*,197***	b	-,065	,247**	-,061	b	,047
2a				b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b
2b					-,022	b	*,264***	b	,072	,002	,087	b	*,162***
2c						b	,003	b	*-,216***	,080	,005	b	,017
2d							b	b	b	b	b	b	b
2e								b	-,032	*,079*	*,181***	b	,050
2f									b	b	b	b	b
2g										*-,152***	*-,115*	b	,075
2h											,023	b	-,078
2i												b	*-,154***
2j													b
2k													-

(1a: What is your gender? 1: Female, 2: Male; 1b: How do you make a living? 1: Family, 2: Scholarship, 3: Working, 4: Family-Scholarship; 1c: How many years have you been studying at the university? 1: 1, 2: 2, 3: 3, 4: 4, 5: 5, 6: 6, 7: 7 and up; 2a: Did you feel any difference in the aid of associations during the pandemic process? 1: Yes, 2: No; 2b: Did the pandemic coincide with Ramadan provide an advantage in your life during this period? 1: Yes, 2: No; 2c: Which aids met your needs most? 1: Food aid, 2: Cash money, 3: Rent / Invoice, 4: Food and Hygiene supplies aid; 2d: Do you feel the equality principle of the association?1: Yes, 2: No; 2e: How did the interruption of active education during the pandemic affect you? 1: Affected positively, 2: Affected negatively 2f: How will the interruption of Turkish Language preparatory education affect the next semester lessons? 1: Effects, 2: Partially Effects, 3: Does not affect; 2g: How did the dormitory closure affect you during the pandemic period? 1: I was worried, 2: I stayed at my friends' house, 3: I had a problem carrying my belongings, 4: Helplessness, 5: Fatigue, 6: Economic difficulty; 2h: List the educational problems you encountered during the distance education process? 1: Language problem, 2: Internet problem, 3: Using technology, 4: Giving practical/applied courses by distance education; 2i: What was the first feeling you felt during the pandemic process? 1: Fear, 2: Anxiety, 3: Helplessness, 4: Happiness, 5: Joy, 6: Panic, 7: Sorrow(Sadness), 8: Longing, 9: Reunion; 2j: Would you like to spend the pandemic process with your family? 1: Yes, 2: No; 2h: How was your relationship with other foreign students affected during the pandemic process? 1: We got closer to each other, 2: We supported each other not only financially but also morally, 3: The epidemic brought international students together at a common point).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Assessment of the social support and educational process for International University students studying in Turkey during the COVID-19 process

In this study, which evaluated the perspectives of international students studying in universities in Turkey during Covid-19 process, surveys participants are 58% women and 42% male students. These students have following nationalities such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Indonesia, Ivory, Palestine, Ghana, South Sudan, Georgia, Iraq, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Malawi, Egypt, Myanmar, Nigeria, Central Africa, Uzbekistan, Russia, Senegal, Somalia. It consists of Somali Land, Syrian, Thai, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Jordan and Yemen. According to the correlation analysis results found to be significant at the 95% confidence level (p <0.05) in Table 1; male students studying at the universities in Turkey for a long time (r = 0.263 **) stated that the pandemic coincided with Ramadan was not an advantage (r = 0, 294 **), and that interrupting the active education in this process affected them negatively (r = 0.354 **), they stated that international students could come together to support each other during this period (r = 0.116 *). However, international students who have been studying at universities in Turkey for a long time stated that they have felt the difference in the social support/aid made during the pandemic period (r = -, 114 *), the cessation (suspension) of active learning negatively affected them (r = 0.197 **), in addition to that they stated that the most important problem they encountered in distance education was the "language problem" i.e. Turkish Language preparatory classes (r = 0.247 **).

Students who felt the feeling of "anxiety" during the pandemic process and had to stay at their friends' houses stated that they needed food aid and cash the most (r = -0.216 **). Students who were affected negatively by the interruption of active education stated that they mostly felt "fear", "anxiety" and "helplessness" [Table 1]. Students who thought that the cessation of Turkish education during the new course period (the pandemic process) would affect their lessons, stated that they would mostly have problems (r = -0.152 **) due to the interruption of Turkish Language education (the language education they received education). It was frequently stated by the students (r = -0.154 **) that the feelings of "fear", "anxiety" and "helplessness" felt during the pandemic process brought international students closer to each other.

The interruption of education in the Covid-19 process was considered as an important decision by international students and was welcomed by the majority of students. In this period of "staying at home" time, they spend more time for themselves and for their personal development such as language education, painting, music, sports etc. and also emphasized that the pandemic process was an important opportunity for their personal development. In particular, the majority of students considered the distance education process as unsuccessful. In this context; they listed the inadequacy of infrastructure, the inability of faculty members to conduct the lessons systematically and even their inability in the use of technology, the inability of students to understand Turkish well in distance courses, prolongation of the education process, and uncertainties in the next education period [Figure 1].

Figure 1. Mood analysis of international students in the Covid-19 process
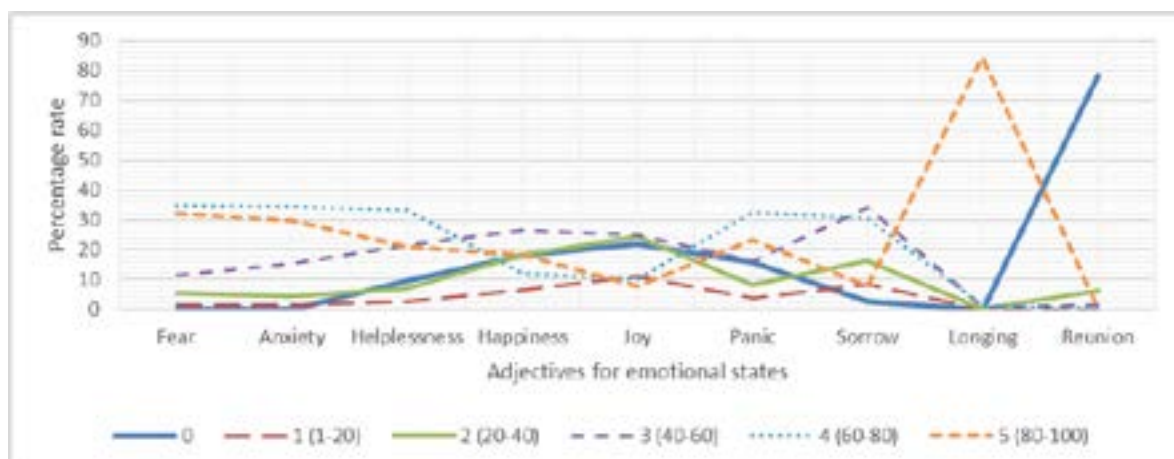
When international students were asked, what was the first emotion they felt during this process, their answers were as follows: 25% "anxiety", 24% "fear", 9.4% "helplessness" and 8.3% "panic".

When the international students studying abroad were asked what was the emotion they felt when the pandemic process started, the percentages of the emotion types in Figure 1 were obtained. In the 80-100% range, 32.2% "fear" and 84.4% "longing" were felt, while 60-80% felt 35% "fear", 34.4% "anxiety", 33.3% "helplessness" and 32.7% felt the feeling of "panic". In addition, the feeling of "reunion" with 78.3% was the emotion parameter most intensely felt by the participants.

3.2. International University Students' Perspective to Social Supports Studying Outside Turkey During COVID-19 Process

When international students studying outside Turkey were asked to evaluate the association work/social aids in Turkey during the pandemic process, they stated that they found the financial and spiritual support made in this process to be successful and they felt themselves even luckier than international students studying in other countries. In addition, Turkey's support (public assistance) for international students in the pandemic process was not in many countries [Table 2]. They emphasized that Turkish people showed their hospitality by approaching each student equally, regardless of religion, language or race.

Thanks to the campaign for cooperation and solidarity initiated by Official Institutions and Civil Society in Turkey, the devastating effects of the pandemic were felt at a minimum level during the pandemic process. Although the most affected sector in the pandemic includes international students all around the World, international students studying in Turkey are the least affected across the World. Australia is another country that has social support like Turkey and attracts attention on this issue.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The traumas and tragedies that people have experienced throughout history have always affected individuals' mental health and include lessons on how to cope with these situations (Pfeefferbaumand and S-North, 2020:1). The most effective method that can be developed for these processes is to provide flexibility to the process. In order to develop strategies that will help individuals, it is necessary to create tolerance sensitivity, increase social support, ensure

that people connect with each other and meet in value-oriented actions (Polizzi et. al., 2020:60). In case of an emergency, university students whose mental health is significantly affected also need the attention, help and support of the community and university administrators as well as the support they receive from their families. For this reason, it is recommended that government officials and university administrators develop problem-oriented solutions and cooperate in order to enable university students to access quality and timely psychological services (Bavel et. al., 2020:29). It should not be forgotten that the feeling of loneliness is felt strongly in students who stay away from their families and this situation may have negative health consequences in the long term. Emotional situations can be transferred to others through emotional contagion. Thus, it causes individuals to experience the same emotions (Kramer et. al., 2014:8788) and even the reflection of emotional reactions to events on behaviors (Loewenstein et. al., 2001:273). During the epidemic process, economically disadvantaged groups are more sensitive to exposure and harm by danger, and may experience more negative consequences (Bolin and Kurtz 2018:94, Fothergill and Peek, 2004:94, Mobbs et al., 2015:55).

The first parameter of the study is revealing the anxiety levels of international students through the question "How did international students studying in Turkey go through the Covid-19 process?" which is the starting point of the study. The findings of our research demonstrated that international students experienced intense feelings of fear, anxiety, helplessness (desperation) and panic during the pandemic process and completed the process with the social support of their close friends and associations during this process. Their feelings of anxiety and fear have caused them to feel "longing" for their families in the highest and most severe way with a rate of 84.4%. However, the uncertainty in the process, the anxiety that the education and training process will be prolonged, brought the feeling of "anxiety" and "fear" in international students, bringing the feeling of "longing" into the forefront. In addition, the deficiencies in the education and training process felt before the pandemic became more evident in this process and increased the level of "anxiety". As stated in Kırmızıgül (2020: 286), in the digitalizing world, the technological skills of academicians need to be developed with various trainings in order to reduce the anxiety levels of students against any disruption that may occur in the future (Crawford, 2020:1, Sahu, 2020:e7541). The results obtained in this study also coincide with the results of Zhai and Du (2020:E22) that

Table 2. An Investigation of the Social Support Perspectives of International University Students Studying in Different Countries during the COVID-19 Process

Country/City where the student study abroad	1. Question: How do you evaluate the association activities carried out in Rize during the PANDEMI period?	2. Question: Have similar activities (aids) been carried out in the country where you are studying?	3. Question: Can you compare these aids?
Switzerland (Lucerne/Luzern)	*Successful work. This study reveals the shortcomings of the students studying abroad, except Turkey. It is very nice that the aids are made regardless of gender, religion, language and race*	*Partially*	*Although the activities are done equally to all students, priority should be given to local students.*
Denmark (Odense)	*I follow the association's work on social media. I find it very successful. There is a need for such good work.*	*No*	*We also proposed such a project in our school, but it was not accepted because of different obstacles.*
Australia (Melbourne)	*An important practice for foreign students in distress. The Australian government provides convenience to foreign students in many ways. Even more recreational opportunities are offered to foreign students.*	*Partially*	*Since the Australian government facilitated their participation in all kinds of official documents, jobs and activities, there is no need for such an association work.*
Canada (Montreal)	*In addition to the financial and moral aid offered to the international students by the association, the socialization opportunities established among students are also very successful.*	*No*	*-*
Canada (Quebec)	*The association is doing very successful works on financial aid. Although there are opportunities for recreational activities in Canada, there are still many students who have to work without a work permit.*	*No*	*Similar association work is also needed here.*
France (Bordeaux)	*These activities should be appreciated. The activities of the association showed us how much we lack here. Every foreign student needs moral support as well as financial support.*	*No*	*-*
France (Belfort)	*The association does excellent work (especially psychological support) that should be done in every country. Since we are not French citizens, students experience difficulties in their working. This situation creates economical difficulties.*	*Partially*	*There are offices dealing with foreign and domestic students, especially in registration procedures. Sometimes trips are organized, but the conditions are not very suitable for us.*
France (Paris)	*It is interesting that the president of the association for international students is a foreign student. Because, assigning such tasks to foreign students in France is not welcomed.*	*Partially*	*There is no association dealing with foreign students. Unless you know French, your job is quite difficult.*
France (Belfort)	*The work done is very impressive, I wish such activities could be done here as well. Here, the special situation (being abroad, language problem, etc.) is not taken into account at all.*	*No*	*-*
France (Lyon)	*Social aid activities are important social support for international students that should be done in every country.*	*No*	*There are offices that take care of students, but they can only help with forms at the university.*

the psychological support should be well-programmed for students studying at universities when faced with natural disasters. The second parameter of the study is the global analysis of the social support provided for international university students through the question "What are the social supports / aid for international students studying outside Turkey during the Covid-19 process in Turkey?" constitutes The findings obtained showed that the life process of all foreign students who went through this process away from their families was difficult. The financial dimension as well as the spiritual dimension created by the process on individuals caused international students to be more affected by the process. When examining how the Covid-19 public health crisis changed the lives of international students and the effects of social supports on this process; it was also determined that the students were able to devote more time to the cultural studies they want to do (learning a second language, improving Turkish reading comprehension, playing musical instruments, playing sports, reading books, etc.). These achievements have also positively affected the education process and life styles of international students.

The results of this study, which aims to reveal how important the social support provided to international students during the Covid-19 process is, show that any social assistance (material or moral) provided for international students has a positive reflection on individuals. International students, who had to spend this process away from their families, had the chance to undergo the Covid-19 process in a safe environment thanks to these social supports. Considering the Covid-19 outbreak as an opportunity in this process, the association managers have also improved their existing systematic studies in order to facilitate the lives of guest (international) students. Thus, the necessity of conducting a multidisciplinary study came to the agenda and a step was taken towards professionalization. While the borders between countries were clearly felt by international students before the epidemic, during the Covid-19 process, these borders became almost unnoticeable with the social support provided by the associations. The fact that all these social supports are provided among the international students regardless of religion, language and race, supports globalization positively. This situation has also enabled individuals of different religions and races to get closer to each other, and the concept of globalization was interpreted by students as a concept of family. Students realized the importance of humanitarian aid when faced with extraordinary problems like this outbreak. With this experience, they

might be able to feel safer by experiencing that they can come together in different natural disasters that may occur in the future. The efforts of the associations in these humanitarian activities operating in Turkey might positively influence the decisions of international students towards our country in the future.

Although the conflicts between countries and political problems continue in the globalized world, natural disasters can bring people together and closer to each other, regardless of religion, language and race. *"There is a negative prejudice stemming from the regional political situation of Lebanon and Iran, and in particular due to political and sectarian conflicts against each other especially in the minds of the people living in these countries. Together with these negative thoughts that exist in the background of our minds, we met at a common point in Turkey. We were like strangers when we met each other. Due to the absence of discrimination in Turkey, and especially thanks to our RİUDER association's efforts, we became friends in the first encounter as if there were no political or religious problems between us. Because RIUDER planted the saplings of brotherhood and tolerance within us. We will continue to follow the footsteps and plant these saplings in every heart (Awatef ALİ/Lebanese student). "*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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