

A Novel Measure for Soft Power: Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students*

Yumuşak Güç İçin Yeni Bir Ölçek: Uluslararası Öğrenciler İçin Algılanan Yumuşak Güç Ölçeği

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ABSTRACT

Soft power is a significant contemporary notion of power observed in multiple ways that forge effective international diplomacy that accounts for co-opting, persuasion, and creating a sphere of influence despite coercive ways of power. Soft power refers to the ability to persuade, to create an appeal and is considered an asset in cultivating global influence in multiple terms. The potential soft power of higher education institutions (HEIs) contextualizes the soft power construct into attraction, satisfaction, and the expectation of a favorable decision and reflects an increased likelihood of diplomatic success through international students as para-diplomats. To this end, the study provides an account of the development of a new multidimensional construct measure of the potential soft power of HEIs. The 26-item Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students (PESPSIS) explores the process and the outcome aspects of soft power, providing a valid and reliable instrument based on international students' perceptions of the potential soft power of HEIs. Findings from the study involving 230 international students affiliated with a Turkish public university demonstrate that the PESPSIS has acceptable internal reliability and construct validity. The results also indicate a 3-factor structure consisting of 26 items, as attraction, satisfaction, and expectation of a favorable decision, accounting for 54.24% of the total variance explained. It is suggested that an instrument such as the PESPSIS aligns more closely with the conceptualization of the soft power of HEIs and provides a valid construct measure of soft power relevant to research and practice in university student populations.

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ÖZ

Yumuşak güç, sert ya da zorlayıcı güce rağmen işbirliği, ikna ve bir etki alanı yaratmayı amaç edinen, etkili uluslararası diplomasi oluşturan ve çeşitli şekillerde gözlemlenen önemli bir çağdaş güç kavramıdır. Yumuşak güç, ikna etme, çekicilik yaratma becerisini ifade eder ve birçok açıdan küresel etkiyi geliştirmede bir varlık olarak kabul edilir. Yükseköğretim kurumlarının potansiyel yumuşak gücü, yumuşak güç yapısını çekicilik, memnuniyet ve lehte (olumlu) karar beklentisi olarak bağlamsallaştırır ve para-diplomatlar olarak uluslararası öğrenciler aracılığıyla artan bir diplomatik başarı olasılığını yansıtır. Bu amaçla, çalışmada HEI'lerin potansiyel yumuşak gücünün ölçülmesine yönelik çok boyutlu ve yeni bir ölçme aracının geliştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. 26 maddelik Uluslararası Öğrenciler İçin Algılanan Yumuşak Güç Ölçeği [Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students (PESPSIS)], uluslararası öğrencilerin HEI'lerin potansiyel yumuşak gücüne ilişkin algılarına dayanan geçerli ve güvenilir bir ölçüm modeli sağlayarak, yumuşak gücün süreç ve sonuç yönlerinin değerlendirilmesine olanak tanır. Bir Türk devlet üniversitesinde bulunan 230 uluslararası öğrencilerden elde edilen bulgular, PESPSIS'in kabul edilebilir bir iç güvenilirliğe ve yapı geçerliliğine sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca araştırma bulguları, çekicilik/cazibe, memnuniyet ve lehte karar beklentisi olarak 26 madde altına toplanan ve açıklanan toplam varyansın %54,24'ünü oluşturan 3 faktörlü bir yapıya işaret etmektedir. PESPSIS gibi bir aracın, HEI'lerin yumuşak gücünün kavramsallaştırılmasıyla uyumlu olduğu ve üniversite öğrenci popülasyonlarında araştırma ve uygulamaya ilgili geçerli bir yumuşak güç yapısı ölçüsü sağladığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Yumuşak güç, Uluslararası öğrenci, Yükseköğretim, Uluslararasılaşma*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed unprecedented political, economic, and technological changes. Accordingly, countries have engaged in a global competition to amass wealth and consolidate their power. The competition has altered the geopolitical and economic framework and policies to expand international influence. Given today's evolving polycentric world order, states strive to increase their attractiveness and strengthen their international status to achieve their policy goals and ensure long-term robust multi-dimensional development. In this regard, many nations devise strategies, formulate policies, and implement measures, yet today's main challenge is how to forge an international sphere of influence.

Countries have recently realized that they could not expand their international influence through outdated strategies like military might, tutelage power, and other forms of coercive power that were once employed to dominate the other. They have embarked on a race to change or diversify these methods since using outdated coercive methods to secure national security, achieve foreign policy objectives and broaden influence internationally is fraught with many negative consequences and the risk of dealing a severe blow to their global image. Nye (1990) argues that in the post-Cold War era, with the shift in the axis of power, there has been a shift away from coercive or “hard” power towards a reliance on persuasion through the intangible or “soft” elements of power. Furthermore, given the current circumstances, hard power is no longer the ultimate determinant (Nye, 2021). It is evident that many nations formerly utilized their hard power to dominate or subjugate other countries and have abandoned this strategy (Ostashova, 2020).

Considering the current paradigm shift in power conceptualization, the global endeavor to forge an appealing reputation has escalated. Many have successfully implemented their policies on a global scale by utilizing soft power instruments through mutual communication, contact, persuasion, and cooperation (Özkan, 2015). Hence, soft power tools have come to the fore due to the high cost of executing hard power policies and the negative image they create. To that end, countries have discovered how crucial it is to cultivate nation branding and cultural and public diplomacy through soft power tools to maintain and promote national interests overseas (Pamment, 2014).

In recent years, many nations, including superpowers, have attempted to strengthen their international interests through educational diplomacy. They utilize higher education (HE) and the exchange of ideas to exert influence over other nations, provided that they establish international relations based on the power of ideas and cultural diplomacy rather than coercion (Khan, Ahmad, & Fernald, 2020). Snow (2008) states that countries no longer rely on military might but on soft power elements such as science, art, culture, sports, and education. Therefore, higher education institutions (HEIs) are a valuable soft power asset in this process that can do considerably more than traditional diplomatic

methods (Peterson, 2014). Countries have begun to restructure their HE policies and institutions to sync with increasingly competitive markets, advances in science and technology, and new dynamics of the period as global interdependence has grown. Good relations with one another have become crucial. Besides, the changes and developments undergone in HEIs from the past to the present have turned them into increasingly powerful tools for educational diplomacy.

Research offers convincing evidence that higher education is a key soft power instrument, particularly with the efforts for internationalization in higher education. Li (2018), for instance, emphasizes that higher education is a crucial soft power-generating asset in an integrated world. Aras and Mohammed (2019) posit that a significant number of nations currently rely on higher education to expand their national interests on a global scale. Gutiérrez (2019) underlines that higher education is a tool to reinforce soft political power and recruit private interests. Khan, Ahmed, and Fernald (2020) state that countries such as the US, the UK, and Australia foster higher education initiatives and create opportunities to cultivate soft power. The Fulbright program, for example, is deemed an effective tool for the US to cultivate soft power through public diplomacy (Aras & Mohammed, 2019). Likewise, through various initiatives abroad, the British Council serves as an effective diplomatic instrument for the UK. Makarevskaya (2020) notes that China, as a growing power, employs exchange programs to leverage culture and education, particularly in higher education.

In their study, Wu and Zha (2018) claim that internationalization in higher education with an outward-oriented axis is a powerful instrument for generating soft power. The researchers cite South Korea and China as examples, highlighting both countries' initiatives for cultural diplomacy to boost their soft power overseas by utilizing internationalization in higher education. In addition, Nye (2004) notes, for the first time in history, superpowers pay special attention to the quality of their HEIs and make it a policy priority. Therefore, today many global states have undergone endeavors to reconstruct their higher education policies with a soft power focus by setting different

strategies and goals for the internationalization of HEIs to benefit from the process at the maximum level.

From a broader perspective, Vaxevanidou (2018) points out that international education, as an effective instrument of soft power, can provide countries with a wide range of benefits, including generating commercial value, promoting national policies, and contributing to development and economic growth. At this point, states could take advantage of the internationalization of higher education to establish a positive international image, forge global influence and transmit their cultural values through international students. The initiatives for internationalization are a crucial component of national policies to attract and entice talented international students as they help governments cultivate soft power (Cowen & Arsenault, 2008). Thus, the internationalization of higher education facilitates generating soft power, as positive student exchange experiences are believed to strengthen intellectual, commercial, and social ties, boost a country's reputation, and increase its capacity to take part in and shape regional or global events (Byrne & Hall, 2013). In other words, enhancing the international reputation of HEIs might help a nation promote its cultural ideals abroad; hence, hosting international students could create a chance to build a network of reliable allies overseas that will help improve relations with other societal and political actors.

Educational activities on an international scale serve as both an indicator and a resource of soft power (McClory & Harvey, 2016). In this sense, it becomes evident that nations that are strong and wealthy both at home and abroad conduct these activities through institutes, culture centers, schools, or educational institutions of various structures or through initiatives that offer opportunities for exchange and scholarships for international students. For instance, Li (2018) asserts that the British Council for the UK, the Goethe Institutes for Germany, and the Confucius Institutes of China are deemed practical tools to generate soft power. Similarly, regarding accumulating soft power through higher education focusing on internationalization, Amirbek and Ydyrys (2014) note that many countries believe education is a fundamental way to promote their national interests in the international arena.

Several developed and developing countries such as the United States, European countries, China, Russia and Turkey have implemented various higher education programs to attract competent and promising young international students. As more nations worldwide foster their HEIs by formulating internationalization-oriented policies and gearing up a toolkit to promote their national interests globally, Turkey, a developing country, has devised its own HE policies and instruments to this end (Arslan & Polat, in press). Study in Turkey program initiated by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), Türkiye Scholarships, and Yunus Emre Institutions as counterparts of their international versions could set an example for the initiatives devised by Turkish government agencies. In particular, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), established in 2010, is in charge of organizing the activities of Turks and related communities living abroad and fostering relationships through economic, social, and cultural activities. YTB is also responsible for government-funded initiatives like Türkiye Scholarships that provide a range of educational opportunities for international students and researchers to pursue undergraduate, graduate, research, and language degrees in Türkiye's most renowned universities. Additionally, TalentforBIZ, another initiative of YTB, offers career options for promising young talents with global Turkish companies (YTB, 2023). Thus, YTB's unique contribution to generating soft power through collective efforts closely allied with educational diplomacy objectives to forge a strong image to pull more international students is of paramount in cultivating soft power.

In line with the latest strategies and HE policies for more internationalization, the number of international students at Turkish HEIs has grown exponentially over the last few decades. As of 2022, there were 260,289 international students enrolled in tertiary education in Turkey (CoHE, 2023). A combination of rationales undergirds the rise in the number (Arslan & Polat, in press), yet educational diplomacy stands out as it shapes the prospects of cultivating more soft power. Like many countries, Turkey targets generating more soft power by expanding its network or "volunteer army" of trusted allies. In this regard, it is worth considering that the main goal is to expand and strengthen global influence by expecting international students to play a para-diplomatic role and serve as

ambassadors of host nations in their home countries where higher education becomes a potent soft power tool (Wilson, 2014).

Given the above context, the question arises of converting soft power assets (international students in this case) into desired outcomes as trusted allies or volunteer ambassadors. To this end, this research attempts to construct and validate an instrument to understand and assess international students' perceptions of the soft power of Turkish HEIs. A review of the literature reveals a growing body of research focusing on higher education as a strategic instrument of educational diplomacy to cultivate soft power (e.g., Bislev, 2017; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Lomer, 2017; Nye, 2004; Stetar et al., 2010), yet there is hardly any mention of a scale or a quantitative tool to assess how international students perceive the potential soft power of HEIs. Besides, the measurement of the soft power of HEIs through quantitative tools is almost nonexistent in the related literature. Thus, in the following section, we first focus on the definition of soft power and the conventional measurement of assets and then reconceptualize the soft power of higher education to develop a reliable and valid quantitative instrument.

Reconceptualizing the Soft Power of Higher Education

In the broadest sense, soft power refers to the ability to influence without resorting to coercive means (Nye, 2004). From a dialectical perspective, soft power is the capacity to influence through attraction and persuasion, as opposed to coercive means such as military might, sanctions, or inducement, i.e., bribery or payment. More succinctly, Nye (2021) states that hard power pushes and soft power pulls, or that hard power is like dangling carrots or sticks, while soft power is more like a magnet. Thus, achieving the desired outcomes might be possible without using hard power such as inducements, "carrots", or threats "sticks". Particularly since the aftermath of the Cold War, it has become increasingly crucial "to win hearts and minds" as "overreliance on hard power is not the way to success" (Nye, 2008, p. 94). According to Nye (2005), a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies are the primary resources of soft power, and they all contribute to the attractiveness or appeal of a nation. He further adds that soft power refers to a state's capacity to persuade others to act in its interests and influence their choices.

In other words, through soft power, a state can make other countries admire its values and aspire to them (Nye, 2004). Since the notion of creating influence through hard power has been replaced by soft power means, it has become inevitable for countries to operationalize soft power tools like HEIs to exert success at the international level by strengthening their reputation and attraction.

In this context, benefiting from international students as trusted allies requires building a robust reputation for HEIs and creating opportunities to pull them in. Nevertheless, these are only some of the requisites a nation should comply with. A combination of several factors, including the quality of education, affordability, global image, culture, and the economic condition of a nation, might impact students' decisions to study abroad. In his study of pull factors for international students to Turkish HEIs, Kondakçı (2011) reports that academic quality, desire to experience host culture, locational proximity, and historical heritage are deemed influential factors in attracting international students, yet they could differ upon nationality. Therefore, the first concept for assessing international students' perceptions is through the attraction that includes reputation, image and affordability of HEIs. Research has shown that a strong image and reputation are significant for HEIs to attract more international students (Lafuente Ruiz de Sabando, Forcada, & Zorrilla, 2019; Irfan et al., 2020; Sung & Yang, 2008). More specifically, a solid reputation or image of HEIs, though, not only attracts students but also cultivates some soft power by winning hearts and minds. Thus, we believe that creating attraction by various means is an essential factor shaping the soft power of HEIs.

Together with attraction, satisfaction is another vital element to bring about the potential soft power of HEIs. International students' satisfaction is essential for successful internationalization with desired soft power outcomes. The quality of their experiences (off and on campus), their contentment with the educational quality, and the resources provided by HEIs all seriously impact international students' perceptions. As Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker, and Groggaard (2002, p.183) in their comprehensive study posit that students' satisfaction, a multi-dimensional concept, is determined by "the academic and pedagogic quality of teaching, social climate, aesthetic aspects of the physical

infrastructure and the quality of services from the administrative staff'. Adopting a broad perspective, Arambewela and Hall (2009) offer convincing evidence that student satisfaction is a primary concern for universities since it fosters positive word-of-mouth, loyalty, retention, and communication among students and gives HEIs a competitive edge. In this context, Gültekin (2019) bridges international students' satisfaction with soft power generation and points out that a positive educational experience might contribute to public diplomacy and foreign policy goals to cultivate more soft power through HEIs. Since satisfaction is a significant determinant of soft power generation, meeting international students' expectations by devising national and international policies is of paramount importance for HEIs. Robust and effective policies to achieve student satisfaction might serve the intention of utilizing international students as trusted allies with long-term benefits.

Cultivating soft power with desired outcomes for HEIs falls into the anticipation of a favorable decision made by international students. Thus, it's anticipated that upon their return home, international students are expected to promote the language and culture of their host country (Nye, 2004). The expectation for international students to play a para-diplomatic role and act as volunteer ambassadors of host countries in their countries (Wilson, 2014) depends mainly on their post-departure choice of collaboration and deciding in favor of host countries. Hence, attraction through reputation, a positive global image, and other factors; satisfaction through implementing effective policies could be viewed as both antecedents and determinants of the anticipation for cooperation/collaboration or a favorable decision.

Generating soft power by winning the hearts and minds of international students, building a solid reputation for HEIs, and pleasing them lead to getting from resources to desired outcomes. Given the reputation of HEIs, the experiences of international students, and the facilities offered by universities, the perceptions of the soft power of HEIs will be different, thus contributing to a significant challenge in assessing the potential soft power of HEIs. Besides, perceptions formed by students of the potential soft power of HEIs are the result of many factors, which will be expressed either as favorable or negative based

on how well HEIs have met their expectations. In this regard, our conceptualization fits well into the domain of attraction, satisfaction and the expectation for a favorable decision as we operationalize them to construct the instrument.

Since international students are intangible resources through which nations cultivate soft power by operationalizing diplomacy-oriented HE policies, assessing their perceptions about the attraction of HEIs, their satisfaction, and their intention to make favorable future decisions for host countries has come to the fore. Furthermore, assessing international students' perceptions is beneficial for understanding to what extent HEIs could contribute to generating more soft power by forging a positive image and strengthening ties that lead to long-lasting affection and a favorable decision for the host country.

However, surprisingly, the available literature on the measurement model of soft power, in general, is somewhat limited to international indexes, such as the *Soft Power 30 Index* ranking countries by a variety of soft power resources or indicators. To measure the relative strength of countries' soft power at many levels, the index combines objective data from six major sub-indices, including government, digital, engagement, education, enterprise, and culture, with data from the pooling, including cuisine, tech products, friendliness, culture, luxury goods, foreign policy, and livability (McClory & Harvey, 2016). In addition, with dissensus on the measurement model of soft power (Seong-Hun, 2018), a closer review of the literature also suggests a list of five major attempts to measure soft power and its components. Wojciuk, Michaek, and Stormowska (2015) identify them as *Measuring National Power*; *Soft Power in Asia: Results of a 2008 Multinational Survey of Public Opinion*; *The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index: 2009 Highlights Report*; *The New Persuaders: An international ranking of soft power*; *Elcano Global Presence Index*. They also point out that the key soft power indexes either do not address the educational dimension at all or do so insufficiently, since the educational dimension of soft power is one of the least developed, both in the literature and in the existing soft power indexes.

The previous research also provides evidence that studies investigating the perceptions of international students regarding a host country's soft power are mostly qualitative as they

are mostly confined to semi-structured interviews (e.g., Aras & Mohammed, 2019; Budak & Terzi, 2021; Bulmer, 2020). However, some claim to be quantitative studies, yet lack an empirically tested or proven reliable instrument to assess the international students' perceptions (e.g., Atkinson, 2010; Crowley-Vigneau, Baykov & Kalyuzhnova, 2022; Olberding & Olberding, 2010).

Considering the context above, although available literature on the soft power of HE has expanded over the last few decades, the need for a reliable instrument continues to dominate the field. Hence, little is known about how assessing the perceptions of international students could operate in shaping evidence-based HE policies to cultivate soft power through para-diplomats (international students). Specific to the Turkish context, as the number of international students in the Turkish higher education system has grown exponentially, utilizing a reliable measure to gain more insight into international students' perceptions of soft power may help establish evidence-based policies that not only contribute to the overall quality of education and forging a strong international image of HEIs but also help build an effective diplomatic infrastructure with the help of its trusted allies, international students. To this end, developing a valid and reliable measure to help assess international students' perceptions towards the potential soft power of HEIs is essential, as no such instrument exists in the literature.

METHODOLOGY

Consisting of two consecutive stages, the initial stage, and the implementation stage, this section details the scale development procedures.

Initial Stage

Following an extensive literature review on scale development and construct validity procedures proposed and clarified by various researchers (e.g., Cohen, Schneider, & Tobin; 2022; DeVellis, 2017; Naillioğlu Kaymak & Sezgin, 2020; Polat & Arslan, 2022), the researchers devised a detailed and sequential approach to develop a valid and reliable measure. To conceptualize the theoretical underpinnings of the scale, researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review. This helped clearly define the theoretical

borders providing the conceptual framework and demonstrating the possible dimensions in line with the instrument's intended use. The scale development procedure was then initialized with a tentative item pool of three dimensions with 58 items that researchers generated based on the theoretical framework outlined above. In the item generation process, researchers intended to develop the measure in English, since conducting research on international students requires utilizing measures that use a common language, are comprehensible and can be accurately answered by individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They ensured that the content was relevant and understandable to the target population by creating the scale items in English, as it is the predominant language of instruction in many higher education institutions across the world. However, the researchers then acknowledged the significance of devising a Turkish version of the scale as most of the participants have been studying Turkish at their institutions as a second foreign language. This might help to increase their willingness to participate and provide more precise responses. Additionally, by providing a Turkish version of the scale items, the researchers wanted to enable Turkish-speaking international students to complete the survey in their second foreign language, which can lessen language-related response bias and increase the sample's representation and impartiality.

Then the researchers opted for to continue the scale development process in both English and Turkish to improve the validity and reliability of the measure. Besides all, developing the scale in both English and Turkish can also enhance cross-cultural comparability of the results and improve the overall quality of the study. To this end researchers continued the scale development process accordingly. At first, the researchers tried to write clear, concise, readable, distinct, and appropriate items for the scale's purpose (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006, p. 814). The researchers then met to revise the clarity and conciseness of the items, leave out illegible ones, and merge any that overlapped. Upon this meticulous preliminary evaluation, seven items were left out.

A systematic approach was employed to create the draft scale in the next phase. First, researchers selected a five-point Likert scale format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to

5 (strongly agree) and then the response anchors and items were formatted suitably. Then, the draft scale was emailed to two separate panels of experts for review. The first group of two have expertise in English language teaching. The second group consisting of five, however, specializes in different areas. Two possess high-quality higher education studies (indexed in SSCI journals), particularly the internationalization of higher education. The other two have researched soft power policies and higher education, and one has expertise in assessment and evaluation research in educational studies. As suggested by Worthington and Whittaker (2006, p. 815), they were asked to evaluate the extent to which the items reflect the content domain (content validity) and for clarity, conciseness, grammar, reading level, face validity, and redundancy. Based on the feedback received from the experts, 8 items were dropped, and 14 items were revised and rewritten for clarity and redundancy. Considering the feedback, the draft scale with 43 items was generated and finalized after the review phases.

Researchers initiated a pilot study and randomly selected international students to take the scale in its draft form to assess the clarity, conciseness, grammar, and reading level of the instructions, items, and response anchors. This was conducted in classrooms under the researchers' guidance, and students were instructed to underline or circle words, phrases or statements that were difficult to understand. Each draft scale was then closely examined. Some students indicated that it was difficult to understand certain words and phrases. Accordingly, no items were therefore left out, but two were altered, and the troublesome words were replaced with simple synonyms.

Implementation Stage

After the preliminary practices mentioned above, the implementation process, including data cleanup, testing normality assumptions, reliability, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA), was undertaken to identify and validate the factor structure of the measure. As the last step of this stage confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to validate the construct of the measure.

Participants

The study sample consists of 230 international students studying at a public university that hosts more than eleven thousand international students from ninety-four different countries (Karabük University [KBU], 2022). Regarding demographics, 27.4% ($n = 63$) of the participants are female, and 72.6% ($n = 167$) are male. Of the participants, 48.3% ($n = 111$) for more than 25 months, 33.4% ($n = 77$) between 13 and 24 months, 11.3% ($n = 26$) for 7–12 months, and only 7% ($n = 16$) for less than six months have lived in Turkey. 87.2% ($n = 202$) of the participants are not scholarship holders, yet only 12.2% ($n = 28$) have a scholarship. Participants are from 29 different countries. The demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender		<i>n</i>	%
	Female	63	27.4
	Male	167	72.6
	Total	230	100.0
Country			
	Syria	43	18.7
	Chad	31	13.5
	Ivory Coast	17	7.4
	Jordan	14	6
	Sudan	14	6
	Yemen	12	5.2
	Indonesia	11	4.8
	Palestine	10	4.3
	Kazakhstan	9	3.9
	Pakistan	9	3.9
	Somalia	8	3.4
	Cameroon	7	3
	Djibouti	7	3
	Morocco	6	2.6
	Afghanistan	5	2.2
	Uzbekistan	5	2.2
	Azerbaijan	4	1.7
	Iraq	4	1.7
	Gabon	4	1.7
	Others (10 countries)	10	4.3
	Total (29 countries)	230	100.0
Duration of Stay			
	0-6 months	16	7
	7-12 months	26	11.3
	13-24 months	77	33.4
	25 months over	111	48.3
	Total	230	100.0
Scholarship Status			
	Yes	28	12.2
	No	202	87.8
	Total	230	100.0

Data Analysis

Employing a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling with maximum variation (Patton, 2015), the data for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were collected from a group of international students in various departments. At first, the sample size was determined considering the number of items in the draft scale and the criteria outlined in the literature (Field, 2017; Kline, 1994; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). Upon receiving approval from the institution's Ethical Review Committee, the data with demographic variables, including gender, country of origin, length of stay in the host country, and scholarship status, were collected from a total of 260 students. Then researchers ran a quick check on the dataset and eliminated 30 forms since some needed to be completed or had erroneous responses. Following this initial cleanup process, researchers decided to analyze the remaining dataset of 230 students, as it is sufficient for EFA (Comrey & Lee, 2013; Kline, 1994; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018).

To verify the normality assumptions, the researchers examined several statistics (mean, mode, median, skewness and kurtosis values) and graphics (histogram and Q-Q plot). According to the descriptive statistics, the mean, median, and mode were all convergent, and the skewness and kurtosis coefficients were within the allowable threshold of +1 and -1. (Bryne, 2010; Field, 2017; George & Mallery, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). The histogram and Q-Q plot graphics also confirmed the normal distribution. After verifying the normality parameters, the z-scores for the items were calculated, and four items that deviated from the normal distribution of +3 and -3 were identified and removed from the dataset. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test for Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were then validated before the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

After all the preliminary checks, the data of the remaining 226 participants were analyzed utilizing the SPSS (version 25) and LISREL (version 8.80). The item-total correlations and Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient were calculated to test the scale's reliability. In sum, the data analysis stage was finalized in two consecutive phases. First, EFA was conducted to confirm the scale's factor structure and construct validity. Then Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilized to investigate the validity of the

structure generated from EFA. The findings are explored in more detail in the following section.

RESULTS

This section reports the results of the validity and reliability analyses conducted throughout the two subsequent phases, EFA and CFA.

Prior to the EFA, the KMO test to check the sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which determines whether a correlation matrix differs considerably from an identity matrix (Bartlett, 1951), were conducted. For the dataset, the KMO value of .93 indicated a marvelous fit (Kaiser, 1974), and the value of Bartlett's test ($X^2(325) = 2959.69, p = .01$) was significant (see Table 2). These findings determined that the dataset met the criteria for factor analysis and displayed a multivariate normal distribution (Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, & Büyüköztürk, 2018). Indicators such as factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, scree plots, and the ratio of the total variance explained were considered when determining the number of significant factors. To reveal the factor structure, principal component analysis was chosen as the extraction method since researchers intended to reduce the number of items while retaining as much of the original item variance as possible. To this end, researchers selected direct oblimin for oblique rotation, assuming the factors were correlated (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The EFA was then conducted using IBM SPSS version 25.

The initial analysis was performed on 43 items. However, the researchers, following a repetitive (one at a time) approach excluded 12 items showing high loadings on multiple factors with a difference of $< .10$ between them and 5 items with low factor loadings of $< .40$. Researchers then decided to retain three factors with at least seven items, eigenvalues of ≥ 1 , and more than 54% overall contribution to the total variance explained (see Table 2). Besides, when examined, the slope of the curve was found to plateau (the elbow shape) after the third point on the scree plot indicating a 3-factor structure with a total of 26 items (see Figure 1). To evaluate item loadings, Comrey and Lee (2013) proposed utilizing certain cut-offs: .71 or higher is excellent, .63 is very good, .55 is good, .45 is fair, and .32 is poor. Accordingly, of the 26 items, eleven were excellent, four were

very good, ten were good, and only one was fair. Besides, the highest item load on the scale was .83, and the lowest item one was .45 (see Table 2).

A structure diverged from one another with correlation values ranging from .37 to .44, regarded optimal (Pallant, 2007), was also verified. The three-factor structure with 26 items explained 54.21% of the total variance. In multifactorial designs, factors accounting for 50%-60% of the total variance explained are deemed sufficient in social sciences (Shrestha, 2021; Yong & Pearce, 2013). Then, the dimensions for the 3-factor structure were identified as Attraction (AT) [Cazibe/Çekilicik (CA/ÇE)]; Satisfaction (SA) [Memnuniyet (ME)]; Expectation of a Favorable Decision (EFD) [Lehte Karar Beklentisi (LKB)], respectively.

After the EFA, the reliability level of the scale, consisting of 26 items, was examined by analyzing the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the scale-sum is .93. When each factor was tested for reliability, the results were .92 for the first factor, .89 for the second factor, and .78 for the third. These results indicate a range of excellent to acceptable fits (George & Mallery, 2010). The next step was to determine item discrimination using reliability analysis and item-total correlation values. According to Field (2017), total item r values should not be lower than .30. Thus, the findings suggest that all reported values for the items in the draft scale were over the cut-off level of .30. In sum, all the results mentioned above are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The EFA Results of the Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students

Factors	Number of Items	KMO	Bartlett's X ²	Eigenvalues	Variance Explained (%)	Factor Loadings		Item Total r		Cronbach's Alpha
						Highest	Lowest	Highest	Lowest	
EFD	11			10,05	38,64	.82	.60	.74	.54	.92
SA	8	.93	2959,69	2,41	9,26	.83	.57	.72	.63	.89
AT	7		p < .01	1,64	6,31	.71	.45	.59	.45	.78
Total	26				54,24			.72	.34	.93

Note. $n = 226$. The extraction method was principal components factoring with an oblique (Direct Oblimin) rotation.

The scree plot in Figure 1 demonstrates that the first three factors account for most of the total variability in data (given by the eigenvalues in Table 2). Each of the first three

factors' eigenvalues is greater than 1. The remaining ones only contribute statistically insignificant to the variability and are most likely unimportant.

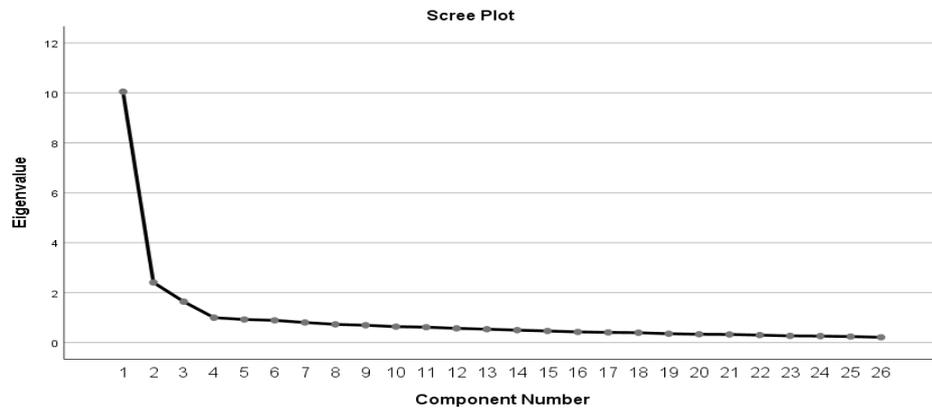


Figure 1. Scree plot for EFA

Upon completing a dynamic and repetitive process of examination and revision for EFA, ultimately leading to a 3-factor structure with 26 items, the researchers conducted CFA to confirm the construct validity of the tentative measure. Table 3 displays the fit indices for the model. The t-values with the lowest score of 6.68 were significant ($p < .01$). The model exhibits good fit considering the RMSEA and SRMR values, excellent fit in terms of the X^2/df , and acceptable fit according to the GFI and AGFI values. Furthermore, the CFI, NFI, NNFI, and IFI values indicate an excellent fit. The modification index values of the model were examined in detail, it was observed that there was a remarkable relationship between the error covariances of, in particular, two items (Item11 and Item14) under the same latent variable. As they are under the same construct measure "satisfaction" the items have similar content. In addition to that, since the wording for both items also includes the same verb "help" this might create a strong correlation between them. Thus, If an error covariance was added, there would be a decrease in the chi-square value and an increase in fit indices. Therefore, with a mutual decision of the researchers the necessary modification was performed by adding an error covariance between the variables under the same latent factor (Satisfaction [SA]) in the model. After

modification, χ^2/df and some fit indices values increased to a certain extent (see Table 3).

Table 3. The CFA Results of the Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students

CFA Results ($n=226$)				
Fit Indices	Before Modification $\chi^2 = 533,02; df = 296 (p < .01)$		After Modification $\chi^2 = 510,81; df = 295 (p < .01)$	
	Observed Values	Acceptable Values	Observed Values	Acceptable Values
χ^2/df	1.80	Excellent Fit $\chi^2/df \leq 2.5$	1.73	Excellent Fit $\chi^2/df \leq 2.5$
RMSEA	.06	Good Fit RMSEA $\leq .80$	0.6	Good Fit RMSEA $\leq .80$
SRMR	.06	Good Fit SRMR $\leq .80$	.06	Good Fit SRMR $\leq .80$
GFI	.85	Acceptable Fit GFI $> .80$	.85	Acceptable Fit GFI $\geq .80$
AGFI	.82	Acceptable Fit AGFI $> .80$	.82	Acceptable Fit AGFI $\geq .80$
CFI	.97	Excellent Fit CFI $\geq .95$	.98	Excellent Fit CFI $\geq .95$
NFI	.95	Excellent Fit NFI $\geq .95$	.95	Excellent Fit NFI $\geq .95$
NNFI	.97	Excellent Fit NNFI $\geq .95$	.97	Excellent Fit NNFI $\geq .95$
IFI	.97	Excellent Fit IFI $\geq .95$	.98	Excellent Fit IFI $\geq .95$

Note. The table above is adopted from the sources; Baumgartner & Homburg (1995); Doll, Xia, & Torkzadeh (1994); Jöreskog & Sörbom (1993); Kline (2011); Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller (2003); Schumacher & Lomax (2004).

Kline (2015) advises that the following indicators should be given at a minimum: the SRMR, RMSEA, CFI, and model chi-square. Thus, the model above refers to a valid and reliable factor structure regarding these fit indices. Even if they do not exceed .90 (the commonly accepted cutoff value), the values for GFI and AGFI meet the criterion that the value is acceptable if above .80, as put forth by Baumgartner and Homburg (1996) and Doll, Xia, and Torkzadeh (1994). Besides, the factor loadings of the items were examined. The factor loadings varied between the lowest .56 and the highest .77 for the

EFD, between the lowest .61 and the highest .79 for the SA, and between the lowest .46 and the highest .75 for the AT (see Figure 2). Most of the factor loadings are very good (> .63) or excellent (> .71); only one is fair (> .45), and they are statistically significant, indicating convergent validity (Comrey & Lee, 2013).

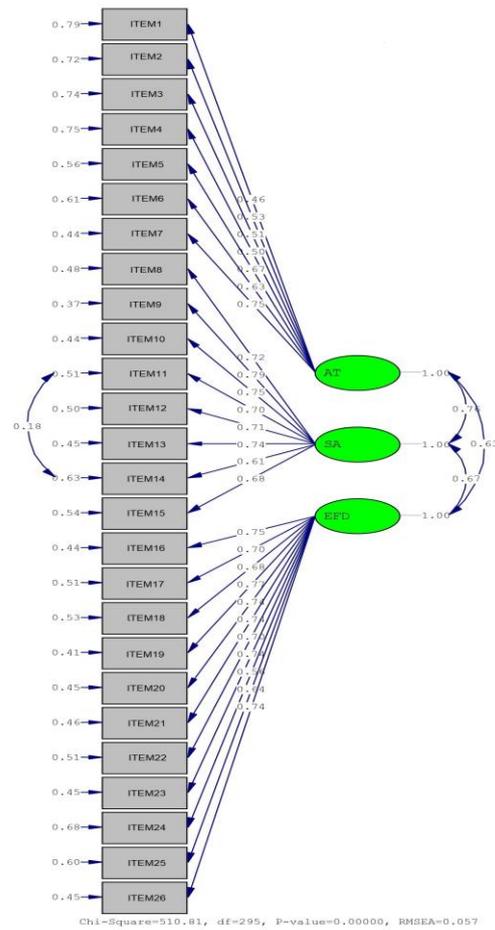


Figure 2. Path Diagram for Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Gone are the times of the past with brutal force, rigid borders, and communication barriers. The door to a new world order has been opened, where interdependence has increased, and borders have disappeared with a paradigm shift in science, technology, and communication, as well as in economy, art, and politics. How things evolve has radically transformed the conventional ways of thinking, perceptions and rituals of the past. As a result, the evolution of the concept of power in time has led to changes in the definitions attributed to the concept. In each period, a definition of power appropriate to the conjuncture has come to the fore. As a matter of fact, the transformation of international systems in the spirit of the times requires a new perspective on the concept of power. In this respect, soft power has become paramount to remaining a central actor in the international arena, where the power of influence matters most. Instead of using coercive power like a military force, countries have honed their systems to cultivate power through soft means like the media, the internet, and education. Most have developed institutions to consolidate power and reinforce their capacity to shape international politics through diplomacy. Thus, HEIs have grown to be critical assets and are now prioritized by policymakers as a means of enhancing soft power and providing a variety of additional advantages (see the introduction part for a broader discussion).

As yielding soft power through international students has gained importance, countries have set their agenda of utilizing international students to create an international propaganda model that uses them as people-to-people ambassadors who carry a positive image and share positive word-of-mouth of the host country (Atkinson, 2010; Bislev, 2017; Nye, 2004). However, with a limited (almost non-existent) discussion of assessing the potential soft power of HEIs through the perceptions of international students, existing literature tends to be primarily based on qualitative studies reporting international students' experiences (challenges they face, adaptation process they have been through, pull and push factors etc.) in a host country (Arslan & Polat, 2023; Hong, 2014; Kılınç, Arslan, & Polat, 2020; Knight, 2011; Kondakçı, 2011; Kondakçı, Oлдаç, & Ertem, 2017;

Polat & Arslan, 2022; Yang, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for a more nuanced discussion on understanding the potential soft power of HEIs and a reliable quantitative tool to assess international students' perceptions. To this end, this research provides a reliable instrument to assess and understand the perceptions of international students towards the potential soft power of HEIs, as winning the hearts and minds of international students might enable a country to reap diplomatic benefits. In this regard, the Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students (PESPSIS), quantitative in nature with unique and useful properties, allows any researcher to assess and compare international students' perceptions of the soft power of HEIs. Besides, it is unique in character as it is the first measure of this aim.

The scale development process starts with a new conceptualization of the potential soft power of HEIs. It enables researchers to theoretically base their assumptions that "winning the hearts and minds of international students could cultivate soft power for a host nation" on three fundamental dimensions: attraction, satisfaction and expectation of a favorable decision for the host country. The dimensions are respectively connected and tightly intertwined since they are antecedents of one another. To illustrate, in the case of international students, researchers assume that forming a perception starts with creating a positive global appeal utilizing various tools such as an excellent academic reputation, affordability, and other factors. Doing so could make a country a preferred destination for international students. However, hosting them is another significant issue that brings about the satisfaction dimension. It requires devising policies, reforming systems, and improving the educational quality and infrastructure on campus and all sorts. Since international students have prior expectations that need to be fulfilled, pleasing them by meeting those expectations could contribute to a positive perception of the host nation in their minds, which might then shape their future decisions. Therefore, their satisfaction level directly impacts their future decision in favor of the host country. A host country's wish to retain strong ties with international students could serve the purpose of generating soft power through para-diplomats (international students). In line with this new

conceptualization, researchers have decided to devise the scale dimensions as attraction, satisfaction and expectation of a favorable decision respectively.

Based on the study findings, PESPSIS is a valid and reliable instrument to assess how international students perceive the potential soft power of HEIs. The researchers' conceptualization of the potential soft power of HEIs includes the dimensions of attraction, satisfaction, and expectation of a favorable decision, and hence this scale could be used to separately assess the students' perceptions on multiple dimensions. The scale, based on first-hand data from international students consistent with the study objectives, might help close a significant gap in higher education (HE) research with a particular emphasis on HE as a soft power resource. Besides, the notion of soft power in higher education deserves further exploration since it is appropriate to analyze host nations' strategies of benefiting from international students as soft power assets, especially their international student recruitment policies. The current instrument could, therefore, facilitate gaining further insight into higher education policy with a soft power focus. Thus, it could help policymakers develop evidence-based HE policies.

Even though the study provides a novel, empirically tested measure to assess the perceptions of international students regarding the potential soft power of HEIs, there are still some issues that require further investigation. One potential limitation of the study is that it utilizes the same sample for both EFA and CFA as it might cause overfitting and poor generalizability problems (Fokkema & Greiff, 2017). Some find it convenient to use the same sample for both yet suggest a careful consideration of the potential drawbacks and risks, such as an excessively positive evaluation of model fit and lack of generalizability (Schreiber et al. 2006). However, this limitation was mainly due to the difficulty in reaching international students with the language competency to complete the surveys in both English and Turkish. As a result, researchers opted to use the same sample because it was convenient and cost-effective. Besides that, the study sample consists of international students from one single public university in Türkiye, which poses another potential drawback. Thus, future research might gather data from a broader sample by incorporating international students from public and private universities to gain

deeper insight into the study problem. In addition, by merging different theoretical frameworks into the mainstream research on the soft power of HEIs, additional predictors or dimensions shaping international students' perceptions could be discovered and investigated in further studies. Further research could also investigate whether there are significant variations in the levels of attraction, satisfaction, and expectation of a favorable decision based on gender or ethnicity of international students. Such studies could provide valuable insight into how demographic variables impact the perceptions and experiences of international students, which could inform policies and interventions aimed at improving their academic and social integrations. Furthermore, the role of other variables, such as age, academic major, or length of stay, in shaping international students' experiences and perceptions could also be examined. In short, investigating the relationship between demographic variables and scores obtained from the scale could help identify potential areas of improvement and enhance our understanding of the complex factors that shape the experiences of international students.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Amaç: Mevcut çalışma kapsamında makro düzeyde yumuşak güç teorisi ve eğitim diplomasisi üzerinden yükseköğretimin ülkeler için birçok farklı işlevinin yanı sıra uluslararası imajı ve etki gücünü artırmamın işlevsel bir aracı ve dolayısıyla potansiyel bir yumuşak güç kaynağı olması gerçeği temel alınarak yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma olgusu üzerinden uluslararası öğrencilerin birer yumuşak güç kaynağı olarak algılarının anlaşılmasının oldukça önemli olduğu gerçeği vurgulanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, çalışmada özellikle son yıllarda yükseköğretimde uluslararasılaşma eğilimleriyle birlikte Türk yükseköğretim sistemi içerisinde sayıları katlanarak artan uluslararası öğrencilerin Türk üniversitelerinin potansiyel yumuşak gücüne ilişkin algılarını tespit etmek ve ölçmek amacıyla geçerli ve güvenilir bir ölçme aracı geliştirmek hedeflenmiştir.

Yöntem: Çalışmanın odağını oluşturan ölçek geliştirme süreçlerine ilişkin literatür incelenmiş ve çalışma kapsamında geliştirilecek ölçek için iki temel aşamadan oluşan bir izlenice takip edilmiştir. Bu bakımdan öncelikle yumuşak güç ve eğitim diplomasisi, yükseköğretimde yumuşak güç ve yumuşak güç unsuru olarak uluslararası öğrenciler ile ilgili literatür kapsamlı şekilde incelenip değerlendirilerek ölçme aracı için teorik bir altyapı oluşturulmuştur. Daha sonra mevcut teorik zemine dayanarak yükseköğretimin yumuşak gücüne ilişkin yeni bir kavramsallaştırmayla birlikte ölçeğin temel boyutlarını oluşturan “cazibe, memnuniyet ve lehte karar beklentisi” olmak kaydıyla temel bir çerçeve belirlenmiştir. Bu yeni teorik çerçeve ve kavramsallaştırma ışığında araştırmacılar tarafından taslak bir madde havuzu oluşturulmuş ve alan uzmanlarının görüşüne sunulmuştur. Bir sonraki aşamada, alan uzmanlarından gelen dönütler doğrultusunda taslak ölçek formu üzerinden pilot çalışma evresine geçilmiş ve bu aşama sonrasında ise ölçeğin taslak formuna son şekli verilmiştir. Bu evrenden sonra veri toplama aşaması gerçekleştirilmiş ve toplamda 260 uluslararası öğrenciden elde edilen veriler üzerinde titiz bir veri ayıklama sürecinden sonra bir dizi öncül analiz (normallik sayıtları, güvenilirlik vs.) gerçekleştirilmiştir. Daha sonraki süreç olan uygulama aşamasında sırasıyla önce ölçeğin faktör yapısının ortaya konulmasına yönelik olarak açımlayıcı faktör analizi (AFA) daha sonra ise AFA sonuçlarından elde edilen ölçek yapısının doğrulanması amacıyla doğrulayıcı faktör analizi (DFA) gerçekleştirilmiş ve bu süreçler sonucunda elde edilen bulgular bir sonraki aşama olan sonuçlar kısmında ayrıntılarıyla rapor edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Yapılan analizler sonucunda elde edilen bulgular incelendiğinde, ilk olarak AFA sonuçlarına göre öz değeri 1'den yüksek ilk boyut 11 (lehte karar beklentisi), ikinci boyut, 8 (memnuniyet) ve üçüncü boyut 7 (cazibe/çekicilik) olmak üzere toplamda 26 maddeden oluşan ve açıklanan toplam varyansın %54,24 olduğu 3 boyutlu bir yapının ortaya çıktığı anlaşılmaktadır. Ayrıca, her boyut için Cronbach's Alpha güvenilirlik katsayısı incelendiğinde birinci boyut .92, ikinci boyut .89 ve üçüncü boyut için ise .78 olarak gözlemlendiği anlaşılmakla birlikte ölçek toplamı için bu sayının .93 ile oldukça iyi bir eşiği temsil ettiği anlaşılmaktadır. Faktör yükleri bağlamında değerlendirildiğinde ilk boyutta madde faktör yüklerinin en yüksek .82, en düşük .60 arasında olduğu; ikinci boyutta ise bu değerlerin .83 ile .57 arasında ve üçüncü boyutta ise bu oranların .71 ile .45 arasında değiştiği anlaşılmaktadır. Madde faktör yükleri açısından bakıldığında da ölçeği oluşturan maddelerin faktör yüklerinin yeterli aralıkta olduğu anlaşılmaktadır (daha fazla ayrıntı için Tablo 2'ye bakınız). AFA sonucunda elde edilen yapının doğrulanması için yapılan doğrulayıcı

faktör analizi sonuçları (DFA) değerlendirildiğinde ölçek yapısının belli uyum indeksleri açısından incelendiğinde χ^2/sd 1.73 ile mükemmel uyuma; RMSEA değerinin .06 ile iyi uyuma; SRMR .06 ile iyi uyuma; CFI .98; NFI .95; NNFI .97 ve IFI .98 ile mükemmel uyuma işaret ettiği görülmektedir. Ayrıca GFI .85 ve AGFI .82 ile kabul edilebilir bir uyum aralığında oldukları anlaşılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak her iki analiz (AFA-DFA) verileri bütüncül bir biçimde değerlendirildiğinde “Uluslararası Öğrenciler İçin Algılanan Yumuşak Güç [Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students (PESPSIS)]” ölçeğinin kabul edilebilir bir iç güvenilirliğe ve yapı geçerliliğine sahip olduğunu anlaşılmaktadır.

Tartışma ve Sonuç: Uluslararası öğrenciler aracılığıyla yumuşak güç potansiyelini artırma ve uluslararası arenada etki kapasitesini geliştirme gibi değişkenler önem kazandıkça ülkeler, uluslararası öğrencilerden birer para-diplomat olarak faydalanmanın önemini kavramışlardır. Ancak, uluslararası öğrencilerin algıları yoluyla yükseköğretim kurumlarının potansiyel yumuşak gücünün değerlendirilmesine ilişkin sınırlı (neredeyse hiç olmayan) tartışma ile mevcut literatür, öncelikle uluslararası öğrencilerin deneyimlerini (karşılaştıkları zorluklar, yaşadıkları uyum süreci) rapor eden nitel araştırmalara dayalı olma eğilimindedir. Bu nedenle, üniversitelerin potansiyel yumuşak gücünü anlama konusunda daha incelikli bir tartışmaya ve uluslararası öğrencilerin algılarını değerlendirmek için güvenilir bir nicel araca olan ihtiyacı karşılamak amacıyla mevcut araştırma, uluslararası öğrencilerin üniversitelerin potansiyel yumuşak gücüne yönelik algılarını değerlendirmek ve anlamak için güvenilir ve geçerli bir araç sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Uluslararası Öğrenciler İçin Algılanan Yumuşak Güç Ölçeği (PESPSIS), herhangi bir araştırmacının uluslararası öğrencilerin yumuşak gücüne ilişkin algılarını değerlendirmesine ve karşılaştırmasına olanak tanıyan ve aynı zamanda bu amaca yönelik ilk nicel ölçüm aracı olduğu için özgün bir nitelik taşımaktadır. Ancak çalışma, ampirik olarak test edilmiş yeni bir ölçüm aracı sağlasa da çalışmanın örnekleminin Türkiye'deki tek bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören uluslararası öğrenciler oluşması bir sınırlılık oluşturmaktadır. Bu bakımdan ardıl araştırmalar, daha kapsamlı bir teorik temel ve daha önemli çıkarımlar oluşturmak için devlet ve özel üniversitelerden uluslararası öğrencileri dahil ederek örneklerini genişletebilir ve ölçüm aracının geçerlik ve güvenilir verilerine ilişkin yeni bulgular sunmasının yanı sıra yumuşak güç odaklı yüksek öğretim politikasına ilişkin daha fazla içgörü kazanmayı kolaylaştırabilir. Böylece, politika yapıcıların kanıta dayalı yükseköğretim politikaları geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilir.

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Contribution of Researchers

The contributions of the authors are as follows: The first author meticulously undertook the task of reviewing and revising the existing literature, subsequently formulating a

comprehensive item pool, and anchoring the study within a robust theoretical framework. Additionally, they were both responsible for orchestrating the entire analytical process and comprehensively reporting all the outcomes derived from the analyses. On the other hand, the second author played a pivotal role in refining the item generation phase and provided substantial input during the revision of the entire article. Furthermore, both authors contributed significantly to the intellectual depth and conceptual cohesion of the ideas presented, ultimately enhancing the overall coherence of the article. .

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of financial or personal interest that could potentially bias the outcomes or interpretation of this research study. This declaration ensures the integrity and impartiality of the findings presented in this work.

Ethics Committee Declaration

We hereby confirm that the research study bearing the title "A Novel Measure for Soft Power: Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students" has been granted approval by the Ethics Committee of Karabük University under the reference number E-78977401-050.02.04-229707. The approval was officially granted on the 18th of January 2023. The research study was meticulously reviewed by the Ethics Committee to ensure its alignment with ethical guidelines and principles governing research involving human subjects. Following a comprehensive assessment of the study's design, methodologies, and potential impact on participants, the Ethics Committee has determined that the study meets the necessary ethical standards. Consequently, the study was conducted in strict

accordance with the approved protocol after receiving the endorsement of the Ethics Committee. This confirmation underscores the researcher’s commitment to upholding ethical considerations in all aspects of the study, and the Ethics Committee of Karabük University will continue to oversee the research’s progression to ensure ongoing adherence to established ethical norms.

Appendix 1

Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students

Dear international students, this research aims to understand and assess international students' perceptions towards the soft power of Turkish Universities. Please read the statements carefully and choose the best option for you. If you don't understand any words in the statements, please use an online dictionary.

Your country:						
Your department:						
Your gender:		Female		Male		
How long have been in Turkey?		0-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25+	
Through which do you come to study?		Personal application	Student agency	Turkey Scholarship	Other	
Do you get a scholarship?		Yes		No		
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Attraction						
1	Turkish universities have such a desirable reputation.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
2	The image of Turkish universities is positive in my country.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
3	Many international students find Turkish universities to be attractive.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
4	Turkey is one of the leading countries hosting international students.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
5	Turkish universities have a good academic reputation.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
6	Turkish universities are recognized internationally.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
7	Turkish universities stand out with their success.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
Satisfaction						
8	My university helps shape my career.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
9	I am very glad that I've chosen Turkish universities.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
10	I am pleased with the positive attitudes of my professors at my university.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
11	When I encounter a problem, my university helps me find a solution.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
12	The sympathy for international students has made me feel connected to my university.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
13	I am content with the educational quality of Turkish universities.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
14	I am happy with how my university's student affairs department helps me.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
15	The welcoming, friendly atmosphere at my university makes me happy.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
Expectation for favorable decision						
16	When I go back to my country, I will be a volunteer ambassador for Turkish universities.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
17	I'll guide and help people in my country who desire to study in Turkey.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
18	I will endorse Turkish culture and the Turkish higher education system in my country.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
19	I'll always keep up my contact with Turkey.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
20	I will join in Turkey-related activities in my home country.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
21	When necessary, I will make decisions in favor of Turkey and Turkish universities.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
22	I will tell the story and spread the voice of my university in the future.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
23	I will retain ties and links to Turkey, as well as my institution.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
24	I'll consider Turkey for future trade and investment opportunities.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
25	I will benefit from my knowledge of Turkish language and culture in my career.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}
26	I'll make an effort to advance the level of collaboration between Turkey and my country.	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}	{--}

Appendix 3



T.C.
KARABÜK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL ve BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU
KARARLARI

TOPLANTI TARİHİ : 24.02.2023
TOPLANTI NO : 2023/02

Karabük Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu toplanmış ve aşağıdaki kararı almıştır.

Karar 10:

28/01/2023 tarihli Öğr. Gör. Kürşat ARSLAN'ın Etik Kurul form ve ekleri görüşüldü.

Karabük Üniversitesi Öğretim Elemanı Öğr. Gör. Kürşat ARSLAN tarafından yürütülen "Uluslararası Öğrenciler için Algılanan Yumuşak Güç Ölçeğinin Geliştirilmesi/Perceived Soft Power Scale for International Students" konulu çalışma kapsamında uygulanmak üzere ekte sunulan çalışmasının etik kurallara uygunluğu oy birliği ile kabul edilmiştir.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elif Çepni".

ASLI GİBİDİR

Prof. Dr. Elif ÇEPNİ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurul Başkanı

