

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' BURNOUT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### YÜKSEK ÖĞRETİM KURUMLARINDA ULUSLARARASI ÖĞRENCİLERİN TÜKENMİŞLİK DÜZEYLERİ

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#### Abstract

International student mobility has been expanding in the past twenty years. Creating economic value and strategic collaborations, developing a common understanding in a socio-cultural context, and generating scientific knowledge at a universal level through projects and research in higher education are the main reasons that play a role in the increase of internationalization efforts. International students who prefer to study outside of their country face many academic, socio-cultural, psychological and economic problems. The purpose of this study is to determine the burnout levels of international students. A descriptive approach incorporating quantitative (MBI-SS) and qualitative methods (semi structured interviews) were adopted in the present study to collect data. A total of 1284 international students were selected for the quantitative and 20 students for the qualitative part of the study. The results of the study revealed the fact that international students have high burnout levels due to academic demands, cultural differences, financial problems, language and homesickness.

**Key Words:** International students, burnout, higher education, cultural shock, discrimination, academic demands, language proficiency, financial problems, homesickness.

#### Özet

Uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliğinin tüm dünyada son yirmi yılda hızla arttığı görülmektedir. Yükseköğretimde ekonomik değer ve stratejik işbirlikleri oluşturmak, sosyo-kültürel bağlamda ortak bir anlayış geliştirmek, proje ve araştırmalarla evrensel düzeyde bilimsel bilgi üretmek, uluslararasılaşma çabalarının artmasında rol oynayan başlıca nedenlerdir. Ülkeleri dışında eğitim almayı tercih eden uluslararası öğrenciler, akademik, sosyo-kültürel, psikolojik ve ekonomik birçok sorunla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, uluslararası öğrencilerin tükenmişlik düzeylerini belirlemektir. Veri toplamak için bu çalışmada nicel (MBI-SS) ve nitel yöntemleri (yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler) içeren betimsel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Araştırmanın nicel bölümü için toplam 1284 uluslararası öğrenci, nitel bölümü için ise 20 öğrenci seçilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçları, uluslararası öğrencilerin akademik talepler, kültürel farklılıklar, maddi sorunlar, dil ve yurdu özlemi gibi nedenlerle tükenmişlik düzeylerinin yüksek olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Uluslararası öğrenciler, tükenmişlik, yüksek öğretim, kültürel şok, ayrımcılık, akademik talepler, dil yeterliliği, finansal sorunlar, memleket özlemi.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Internationalization, which is defined as the process of integrating a global and intercultural dimension to the aims, functions and delivery of educational services (Knight, 2008) has recently gained momentum and has become one of the priority strategies of higher education institutions (Ghasempoor et al., 2011; Reid et al., 2010). The rapid change in the world since 1960s has manifested itself in higher education as in many other fields. The rise in the development efforts of the less developed countries, the need for the qualified manpower of developed countries, personal ambitions and aspirations for better employment prospects, the ease of travel, the lack of high-quality higher education institutions at home, the increase in cooperation and interaction between countries, the desire of individuals to benefit from a different intellectual accumulation outside their own countries, the capacity of higher education institutions abroad to attract talent, and many other reasons have resulted in the acceleration of international student mobility. At the same time, economic, technological and cultural factors have contributed to making international study more affordable and easier to access than in the past. Shortly, its contribution to raise qualified manpower, creating economic value and strategic collaborations, developing a common understanding in a socio-cultural context, and generating scientific knowledge at a universal level through projects and research in higher education are the main reasons in the increase of internationalization efforts.

International student mobility has been expanding quite consistently in the past twenty years. In 2018, 5.6 million higher education students worldwide had crossed a border to study (OECD, 2020). The number of students enrolled in a higher education program is increasing rapidly all over the world. While the number of students enrolled in any higher education institution in the world in 2009 was 170 million, it is estimated that this number will be 262 million in 2025. Many countries of the world today have made international student mobility a topic of competition and use it as a tool to provide benefits in their economic, cultural, academic and many other areas. The number of foreign students enrolled in non-OECD countries has grown by 6.2% per year on average compared to 4.3% for international and foreign students in OECD countries (OECD, 2020).

Turkey's higher education internationalization work, basically is based on academic development and interaction, economic development and solidarity, social and cultural interaction and developing political and diplomatic relations. Since the beginning of the 2000s, major developments exhibited in international education paradigm of the country and universities in Turkey and the number of international students studying in Turkey has been increasing dramatically throughout the past few years. The number of international students in Turkish universities has grown by almost 300% in the last decade. At the end of 2018, the share of Turkey in the world international student market in higher education increased to 1,5 percent. Recent figures provided by the Higher Education Council (2019) suggest that, in 2017/2018, international students accounted for a total of 18.2% of the total Turkish higher education student population. Turkey was among the first 20 countries preferred by international students in the world, with approximately and aims to host two hundred thousands international students in 2023 (OECD, 2020). Most students originated from Turkish and Relatice Communities ( 14.5%) folowed by Asia (8.0%), EU member states (5.4%), Africa (1.5%), North America (1.2%) and the Middle East (1.1%). It is estimated that the total

contribution of international students to the Turkish economy (including state and private sector universities) currently 34 million Euros and reach 58 million euros by 2021.

Research on international students suggests that coming from diverse cultural, educational and linguistic backgrounds, international students have many problems in academic life as being a member of a group, adapting to a new education system, a new city and a foreign environment, financial, social and emotional difficulties, lack of guidance and support, prejudices and homesickness (Abe et al., 1998; Chang et al., 2000; [Deary et al., 2003](#); [Schaufeli et al., 2002](#); [Yang, 2004](#); Yang & Cheng, 2005; [Weckwerth & Flynn, 2006](#); [Zhong et al., 2009](#); Zhang et al., 2007). It is thought that all these difficulties they go through put international students under stress and finally burnout.

Burnout is a global concern that negatively affects the individual's psychological and physical health, as well as an organization's effectiveness. Burnout refers to a problem that interferes with how a person thinks, feels, behaves, or interacts with other people. Individual (personality, values, goals, age, gender, level of education, and family situation) and organizational (organizational structure, nature of the job and type of profession, working hours, shifts, overtime, excessively restrictive prohibitions in the workplace, workload, low wage, role ambiguity, role conflict, social support of colleagues and supervisors) factors are involved in burnout.

Burnout is associated with perceptions of excessive demands, lack of enthusiasm, and feelings of frustration or cynicism due to reduced performance (Maslach & Jackson 1981; Ruotsalainen et al. 2014). Emotional exhaustion (EE) that refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and drained by others is considered to be the most important dimension of burnout syndrome (Roelofs, et. al. 2005 ), and in close relationship with other types of mental illness, such as depression and anxiety disorders. Cynicism (CY), represents the attempt to distance oneself from others to cope with one's heavy workload (Maslach, et. al., 2001) which results in increasing indifference, negative, dehumanized, and insensitive attitudes toward people who are the recipients of one's services. Cynicism, in turn, may be associated with ignorance about the problems and needs of clients or patients and with a focus on rational aspects (Maslach et al. 2001). Academic efficacy (AE), is the experience of inefficacy. It manifests itself in feelings of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with one's accomplishments (Maslach & Jackson 1981). The individual develops a tendency to devalue his or her work and loses the sense of accomplishment and professional goals. The 3 dimensions interact with each other simultaneously and interdependently.

Among students, burnout refers to feeling exhaustion because of study demands, having a cynical and detached attitude toward study, and feeling incompetent as a student. Course stress, course load, or other psychological factors, display a state of emotional exhaustion, a tendency to depersonalization, and a feeling of low personal accomplishment (Lingard, 2007; Yang, 2004; Zhang et al., 2007). [Schaufeli et al. \(2002: 465, 2009\)](#) and Zhang, Gan & Cham (2007) stated the symptoms of academic burnout as, feeling tired, exhaustion due to demanding schoolwork, being sarcastic towards school assignments, and holding negative perceptions of the work, attending disrespectful attitudes, behaving in desensitization, feeling insensitive as a student, and reducing productivity and incompetence and low sense of self-efficacy towards work. Early studies on the syndrome showed that burnout can influence the

students' personal and academic achievements (Li, Song&Guo, 2009; Dyrbye, et al., 2010; Salanova, Schaufeli et al., 2010). In extreme cases, it can lead to school dropout (Dyrbye, et al., 2010) or even suicide (Dyrbye, et al., 2008). It is observed that there are some limited research especially related to higher education students and burnout ([Alarcon et al., 2011](#); Chang et al., 2000; [Deary et al., 2003](#); [Dyrbye et al., 2010](#); Hu&Schaufeli, 2009; [Lin&Huag, 2014](#); Msaouel et al. 2010; [Schaufeli et al., 2002](#); [Stallman &Hurst, 2016](#); [Weckwerth&Flynn, 2006](#); [Yang, 2004](#); Yang &Cheng, 2005; Zhang et al., 2007; [Zhong et al., 2009](#)).

International students who are more vulnerable to experience burnout than the local students are a unique student population who are expected to achieve their academic goal within a pre-specified and usually relatively short period of time in the host country. There is a strong evidence that international students can experience many challenges as a result of language and educational environment, cultural barriers, academic differences, financial difficulties, interpersonal problems, racial discrimination, loss of social support, alienation to a new culture and homesickness (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Hsu, 2003; Hendrickson et. al., 2011; Montgomery, 2010; Sherry et, al., 2010; Smith&Khawaja 2011).

International student burnout is important for several reasons. First, burnout may be a key for understanding a wide range of international students behaviors during their studies. Second, international student burnout may also influence their relationships, present and future, with their institution and with their fellow students, lecturers, and others. Third, the prevalence of international student burnout may affect the general reputation of the institution for new students with potential ramifications for present and future enrollment (Neumann et al., 1990). Therefore, international student burnout is an important aspect of an institution's effectiveness and as such may have distinct policy implications for institutions of higher learning.

Many international students at Turkish universities encounter difficulty (learning frustration, lack of motivation for academic success, or academic shock in lecture and research) when attempting to acculturate and adjust to their environment. The difficulties influence their life experience and academic achievement. If they cannot overcome the difficulties and adjust successfully, they may be unable to reach their preset goals. Making higher education system a center of attraction for international students; will contribute to achieving a competitive higher education system on a global scale for Turkey. With the steady increase in the international student enrollment in Turkish universities, a great deal of research addressing these students' adjustment processes and various needs are crucial and should be carried out frequently. The fact that there are few studies on international student burnout in the World is one of the important factors in the realization of this study. There is still much that we need to find out about the state of academic burnout experienced by international students.

### **1.1.The Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to determine burnout levels of international students. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following questions:

1. What are the reasons of burnout for international students?
2. At what level are the burnout of international students?
3. Do students' burnout levels differ significantly according to their gender, original country, length of accomodation, financial situation and education level?

## 2.METHOD

A descriptive approach was used in the present study in which the data were collected with both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### 2.1. Study Group

In this study international students are defined as “those who left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study. The study group of this research was determined according to sequential mixed method (quantitative-qualitative) sampling, one of the mixed method research designs. Thus, data collected in the first phase of research contribute to the collection of data in the next phase. The study group consisted of 1284 students at graduate and undergraduate levels. The demographic information is given in table 1.

**Table 1 Quantative Data Study Group**

| Demographic Variables  |                               | f   | %     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Gender                 | Female                        | 549 | 42,75 |
|                        | Male                          | 735 | 57,24 |
| Education Level        | Undergraduate                 | 703 | 54,75 |
|                        | Graduate                      | 581 | 45,24 |
| Country                | Europe                        | 218 | 16,97 |
|                        | Africa                        | 109 | 8,48  |
|                        | Asia&Far East                 | 417 | 32,46 |
|                        | Turkish& Relative Communities | 520 | 40,49 |
| Scholarship            | Yes                           | 948 | 75,96 |
|                        | No                            | 336 | 26,16 |
| Lenght of Accomodation | 1 year                        | 386 | 30,06 |
|                        | 2-5 years                     | 847 | 65,96 |
|                        | 6 years &more                 | 51  | 3,97  |

### 2.2.Data Collection

The data were collected through Personal Information Form, Maslach Burnout Inventory Student Survey (MBI-SS) and semi structured interviews.

The MBI-SS consists of 15 items with three constructs: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and academic efficacy. Each subscale contains a series of particular characteristics. Participants were asked to respond to a scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicate a higher level of academic burnout. For realibity Cronbach Alpha values were calculated. The values for emotional exhaustion ( $\alpha=0.78$ ), for cynicism ( $\alpha=0.76$ ), and for academic efficacy ( $\alpha=0.80$ ). International students were contacted via e-mail. The records of these students were taken from the student affairs office. It was explained to international students that participation in the study was completely voluntarily.

The qualitative part of the research was carried out by phenomenology pattern. Descriptive phenomenology which describes people's perceptions and experiences was used to reveal the perceptions and experiences of the students about burnout. Participants were selected with maximum diversity sampling from purposeful samples. The qualitative data were collected through a researcher-designed semi-structured interview and the sample was asked about burnout and the influence of it. Voluntarily participant international students were interviewed in depth, on an individual basis lasting approximately two hours for each. Meetings were made with” google meet” and recorded. The original interview schedule was first pilot-tested with three students who were not involved in the principal study. After each interview,

interviewee's comments were elicited. During the interviews conducted by the researcher, the synonyms of burnout in their own language were listed, and then the burnout syndrome was explained in detail. The following questions were asked:

1. Do you feel burnout while you have been studying at university?
2. What are the most important issues that drive you to burnout?

International students enrolled in the study were coded as IS1, IS2, ...IS20. The demographic characteristics of the participants were shown in the table 2 below.

**Table 2: Sample of Qualitative Research**

| Student | Gender | Education level | Faculty         | Lenght of accomodation | Scholarship | Nationality  |
|---------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| IS1     | Male   | Graduate        | Education       | 1 year                 | Yes         | Turkmenistan |
| IS2     | Female | Undergraduate   | Theology        | 2 years                | No          | Indonesian   |
| IS3     | Male   | Undergraduate   | Engineering     | 1 year                 | No          | Nigeria      |
| IS4     | Male   | Graduate        | Economics       | 4 years                | No          | Tanzania     |
| IS5     | Female | Undergraduate   | Agriculture     | 5 years                | No          | Kamerun      |
| IS6     | Male   | Undergraduate   | Medicine        | 3 years                | Yes         | India        |
| IS7     | Female | Graduate        | Education       | 4 years                | Yes         | Philippines  |
| IS8     | Female | Undergraduate   | Achitecture     | 6years &more           | No          | Albenia      |
| IS9     | Female | Undergraduate   | Social Sciences | 3 years                | Yes         | Nigeria      |
| IS10    | Male   | Undergraduate   | Theology        | 2 years                | Yes         | Morocco      |
| IS11    | Female | Graduate        | Theology        | 4 years                | No          | Indonesian   |
| IS12    | Male   | Graduate        | Veterinary      | 5 years                | No          | Jordan       |
| IS13    | Male   | Undergraduate   | Engineering     | 6years more            | Yes         | Pakistan     |
| IS14    | Male   | Undergraduate   | Economics       | 1 year                 | Yes         | Algeria      |
| IS15    | Female | Undergraduate   | Education       | 3 years                | Yes         | Kazakhstan   |
| IS16    | Female | Graduate        | Veterinary      | 3 years                | No          | Syrian       |
| IS17    | Female | Undergraduate   | Economics       | 4 years                | No          | Tunisian     |
| IS18    | Male   | Graduate        | Engineering     | 2 years                | Yes         | Lebanon      |
| IS19    | Female | Undergraduate   | Agriculture     | 6years &more           | No          | Ethiopia     |
| IS20    | Male   | Undergraduate   | Medicine        | 6years &more           | Yes         | Chad         |

### 2.3.Data Analysis

For the quantative analysis, as the Shapiro-Wilk test show normal dispersion, t-test and one-way analysis of variance were applied. For the variables that were found significant, Turkey HSD test was used to make comparisons across groups. The significant level was found to be  $\alpha=0.05$ .

For the qualitative data the interview records were first transcribed. The transcripts were open coded through a first review to identify initial topics or subjects. The transcriptions were sent back to each respondent for accuracy checks. In so doing, participants had additional opportunity to review, revise, or modify their initial responses. Their acknowledgment of the accuracy of the transcripts and of the researchers' interpretations of the data ensured that trustworthiness was established. Additionally, the interviews were conducted in English, French and Arabic, which allowed international students to fully engage in conversations. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the interviews. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Member checking was used to reduce the impact of subjective bias (Patton, 2002). Reflections were studied to determine what exactly has been said and to code each passage adequately for each participant. The responses of the

participants were cut and pasted under each category. Then thematic similarities and differences were identified under each category. The researcher compared fragments from different interviews, demographic questionnaire responses, and transcriptions of each category among participants. The answers of the international students were directly quoted and they have been used to support the discussion part. The categories were below:



### 3. FINDINGS

Findings obtained from the study are presented under quantitative and qualitative findings.

#### Quantitative Findings

**Table 3. Gender, Education Level, Scholarship and Burnout**

| Subscale             | Gender          | n     | X     | sd   | t     | P    |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|
| Emotional Exhaustion | Male            | 735   | 13.72 | 5.49 | 1.678 | .011 |
|                      | Female          | 549   | 15.46 | 5.25 |       |      |
|                      | Education Level |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Undergraduate   | 703   | 14.27 | 6.4  | 1.656 | .042 |
|                      | Graduate        | 581   | 13.64 | 7.8  |       |      |
|                      | Scholarship     |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Yes             | 948   | 12.85 | 5.94 | 2.291 | .741 |
|                      | No              | 336   | 16.14 | 5.52 |       |      |
| Cynicism             | Gender          |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Male            | 735   | 6.84  | 4.62 | 2.850 | .093 |
|                      | Female          | 549   | 9.09  | 3.32 |       |      |
|                      | Education Level |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Undergraduate   | 703   | 8.19  | 3.88 | 4.351 | .013 |
|                      | Graduate        | 581   | 7.03  | 4.49 |       |      |
|                      | Scholarship     |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Yes             | 948   | 8.91  | 4.26 | 3.891 | .660 |
| No                   | 336             | 9.62  | 3.13  |      |       |      |
| Academic Efficacy    | Gender          |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Male            | 735   | 13.20 | 3.48 | 2.603 | .010 |
|                      | Female          | 549   | 12.18 | 3.41 |       |      |
|                      | Education Level |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Undergraduate   | 703   | 13.02 | 3.26 | 3.521 | .024 |
|                      | Graduate        | 581   | 12.14 | 3.50 |       |      |
|                      | Scholarship     |       |       |      |       |      |
|                      | Yes             | 948   | 13.58 | 3.14 | 3.452 | .000 |
| No                   | 336             | 11.67 | 3.18  |      |       |      |

There were significant differences according to gender in relation to EE ( $t=1.678$ ,  $p=.011$ ) and AE ( $t=2.603$ ,  $p=.010$ ). The results indicated that the female had significantly more exhausted and they feel themselves more efficant than their male counterparts. In CY ( $t=2.850$ ,  $p=.093$ ), although no significant differences were found, the female were significantly more depersonalized. These findings are consistent with (Hsieh, 2006; Dao, Lee & Chang, 2007; Misra, Crist & Burant, 2003; Karaoglu, 2007; Sumer, 2009; Allaberdiyev, 2007) who stated that the international female students confront more stressors.

Undergraduate students significantly feel more exhausted ( $t=1.656$ ,  $p=.042$ ) and cynic ( $t=-4.351$ ,  $p=.013$ ) whereas graduate students feel significantly more accomplished ( $t=3.521$ ,  $p=.024$ ) than their undergraduate counterparts. In contrast, Poyrazli & Kavanaugh (2006) showed that graduate students experience greater levels of anxiety. On EE ( $t=2.291$ ,  $p=.741$ ) and CY ( $t=3.891$ ,  $p=.660$ ) there were not any difference between the international students who have scholarship or not. But on both, the ones who don't have any scholarship are more exhausted ( $X=16.14$ ) and cynic ( $X=9.62$ ). However on AE ( $t=3.452$ ,  $p=.000$ ) students who don't have scholarship feel more accomplished and efficant.

**Table 4. Original Country, Length of Accommodation and Burnout**

| Subscale             | Original Country                 | N     | X     | df | F      | p    | Sig.       |  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|----|--------|------|------------|--|
| Emotional Exhaustion | Europe (A)                       | 218   | 13.27 | 3  | 2.418  | .001 | B-A<br>B-D |  |
|                      | Africa (B)                       | 109   | 15.64 |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | Asia&Far East( C )               | 417   | 14.81 |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | Turkish&Relative Communities (D) | 520   | 9.95  |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | <b>Lenght of Accomodation</b>    |       |       |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | 1 year (A)                       | 386   | 16.00 | 2  | 19.334 | .018 | A-C        |  |
| 2-5 years (B)        | 847                              | 13.77 |       |    |        |      |            |  |
| 6 years &more ( C )  | 51                               | 11.62 |       |    |        |      |            |  |
| Cynicism             | Europe (A)                       | 218   | 9.26  | 3  | 1.009  | .066 |            |  |
|                      | Africa (B)                       | 109   | 11.90 |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | Asia&Far East( C )               | 417   | 10.98 |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | Turkish&Relative Communities (D) | 520   | 9.01  |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | <b>Lenght of Accomodation</b>    |       |       |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | 1 year (A)                       | 386   | 11.60 | 2  | 21.671 | .099 |            |  |
| 2-5 years (B)        | 847                              | 9.99  |       |    |        |      |            |  |
| 6 years &more ( C )  | 51                               | 11.19 |       |    |        |      |            |  |
| Academic Efficacy    | Europe (A)                       | 218   | 14.20 | 3  | 5.598  | .003 | D-B<br>D-C |  |
|                      | Africa (B)                       | 109   | 16.18 |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | Asia&Far East( C )               | 417   | 16.33 |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | Turkish&RelativeCommunities (D)  | 520   | 9.58  |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | <b>Lenght of Accomodation</b>    |       |       |    |        |      |            |  |
|                      | 1 year (A)                       | 386   | 13.29 | 2  | 2.011  | .001 | A-B        |  |
| 2-5 years (B)        | 847                              | 12.01 |       |    |        |      |            |  |
| 6 years &more ( C )  | 51                               | 13.17 |       |    |        |      |            |  |

There were significant differences according to original country in relation to EE ( $F=2.418$ ,  $p=.001$ ). The students from Africa ( $X=15.64$ ) feel more exhausted when compared to European ( $X=13.27$ ) and Turkish Relative Communities ( $X=9.95$ ) counterparts. On cynicism although there is not any significant difference CY ( $F=1.009$ ,  $p=.066$ ), the Africans ( $X=11.90$ ) feel more and the Turkish Relatives Communities ( $X=9.01$ ) feel less depersonalized. On academic efficacy the students from Turkish and relative communities



( $X=9.58$ ) feel themselves significantly more efficant when they are compared to the Africa ( $X=16.18$ ) and Asia & Far East ( $X=16.33$ ) originated students. Asian and African international students, particularly, may have increased difficulty making friends with locals compared to their European and Turkish relatives and communities counterparts.

There were significant differences according to lenght of accomodation in relation to EE ( $F=21.671$ ,  $p= .099$ ). Students who are just starting their education life feel more emotionally exhausted ( $X=16.00$ ) than students who have been studying at this university for more than 6 years ( $X=11.62$ ). In addition, although there was no significant difference in the cynicism, students in their first year were more depersonalized ( $X=11.60$ ). On AE the students who stay in their first year significantly experience more burnout than the students who stays for more than six years. The results is consistent with the research of Khoshlessan (2017) and Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita (2009) who found out that the longer number of years international students studied in comparison to freshman (shorter years), the less study anxiety international students experienced.

### 3.1. Qualitative Findings

In this part of the study, taking the results of interviews into account, the levels of burnout experienced by international students will be presented.

#### *Academic Demand*

International students may also find it difficult to adjust to the teaching style of their host country. Educational system differences between countries make it difficult for international students to adapt to the academic environment. On one hand they are faced with a new education system such as attending classes, respecting deadlines, rules and regulations, assignments and exams in a moment, and on the other face important problems in adapting to the social environment and culture they live in at the same time. Students stated that they often failed and had difficulties in pursuing lessons, homework, etc., both because of language difficulties and as Turkish education system was unlike its own. The findings are coherent with the research results of Townsend & Poh, 2008 and Poyrazlı & Grahame, 2007).

*“Here the education system is conted based and test driven. It is quite abrasive to adapt the system” (IS6)*

*“Some of the topics are really far from me. “ I am very anxious especially during exam periods and homework submissions.” (IS2)*

*“Sometimes I think coming here was a bad idea. There are times where I feel upset, angry or like crying.” (IS18)*

Social support is one of the key factors that significantly affects international students' adjustment. As Hechanova-Alampay et. al., 2002 also pointed out, international students tended to experience less social support during their education.

*“nobody approached us warmly. I don't understand this... I don't know, maybe they are jealous. Sometimes they say "we work so hard to enter this university, but you came without any hardworking. You are here because you are a foreigner". Actually, we also took the exam, but they don't understand that. They might be thinking, "we are here because it is difficult to study in Algeria". They might also be thinking, "They are blocking our way." (IS14)*

*“Especially presentation assignments are a nightmare for me. I can not explain. The class and the teacher cannot understand. It's a complete chaos. I used to be very obsessed and it exhausted me. But I gave up this behavior because it was consuming me.” (IS7)*

*“It takes a lot of time to do homework or answer questions in class assignments. I feel constant pressure because of the language.”(IS17)*

*“It was difficult to adapt to the education system; I have difficulties in preparing homework, taking part in class discussions and group work.” (IS1)*

International students who are not familiar with the university's methods of evaluation experience significant anxiety and burnout.

*“I still feel very helpless before any exam. No matter how hard I work, it doesn't matter sometimes I give the exam paper back without even reading any of the questions because I know what the result will be.” (IS7)*

*“Some of my professors did not even care about the problems I encountered in their lessons and told me that it was my problem, not theirs.” (IS16)*

*“I am still having fear of showing my opinions to the professors. I am not comfortable in the classroom”. (IS2)*

However, international students' academic performance may be below their expectations due to studying in a second language and adapting to the new educational and social environment. As a result, if international students do not overcome all these stress factors, failure and decreased confidence and efficacy will be inevitable.

*“I really have a hard time in the lessons. Sometimes I don't understand anything that is being explained. I feel like an idiot” (IS5)*

*“I feel quite unsuccessful. Coming here was the hardest thing for me. But now, unfortunately I realize that the actual hardest thing is passing exams.” (IS13)*

*“I don't feel comfortable with the classroom activities. Still I 'm stucked in participating discussions” (IS1)*

Most international students agree that studying abroad will allow them to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others. As, Western higher education plays a transformative role towards life-changing opportunities, empowerment, political freedom or economic security (Sellar & Gale, 2011; Stevenson & Willott, 2007), international students try to endure and resist all difficulties. It is certainly expressed that western higher education degrees provide graduates returning to their home countries with major advantages in the labour market compared to locally educated youth.

*“I have big dreams about the future. The diploma I will get will be the salvation of my family and I do not have time to burn out. I have to work hard.” (IS4)*

*“The first year was too difficult because I found myself in a new World but now I developed confidence, success and a good relationship with my classmates I 'm -working as a part-time translator and by actively engaging in student unions I think, in my pocket there are a lot of things I can take with me to Nigeria.”(IS9)*

*“ It's a big opportunity and change. Just having horizons opening up. I have this feeling right now that my eyes are opening up. I have a strong desire to return to Indonesia after graduation, because I feel like I have to give something back to my country and my family who paid for my education.”(IS11)*

### Cultural Conflicts & Prejudice

International students have concerns arising from cultural adaptation and prejudice problems. They have to deal with different value systems, communication models, social communication signs and symbols, and interpersonal relationship patterns (Baklashova & Kazakov, 2016). Feelings and experiences of being rejected, excluded or ignored generally causes intense anxiety, depression, grief, and loneliness in international students (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2006; Jung, Hecht, & Wadsworth, 2007; Wei et al., 2007).

*"I don't know if I'm exhausted, but when I came to Turkey for the first time I was so full of hope and happy but now I am not. I could not get used to anything."* (IS6).

*"So you are there, you don't know what to eat, you don't know where to go. But as time went on, Life started to get a little bit easier." I am having a hard time adapting culturally."* (IS19)

*"I had a hard time understanding the culture in the first years, but now I got used to it. I will miss it when I go back."* (IS10)

*"I feel like I'm in a completely different world. Other than being Muslim, we have no cultural similarities. I often feel unsuccessful and lame."* (IS20)

Personal loneliness is both routine and deep, often peculiar to the international student experience. International students experience burnout when adjusting to a different culture. Especially the students from Africa stated that they were excluded with the following sentences:

*"I would love to have more Turkish friends. So I would feel less alone Sometimes I feel like I'm going crazy."* (IS17)

*"I am friends mostly with other Nigerions or Africans and a few Turks. I think the cultural differences always make it difficult to build a friendship".* (IS9)

*"I feel unaccepted. I try to talk to people but most of them ignore me. Some people are nice to me a little bit but many of them do not even care to ask about me, about my culture or where I'm from. If we could talk I am sure I could build a good relationship with them".* (IS 19)

Conflicting cultures is a strong barrier to building relationships with locals. Research has indicated that a large proportion of international students feel isolated and that they would like to have more local friends (Sawir et al. 2008; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). International students may want to maintain their heritage, sociocultural behaviors, and values. It has been determined that almost all of the international students prefer to make friends with students from their own countries and secondly with local students.

*"I tried to socialize with the local people but I found it to be an additional stress factor because I didn't know what to say or how to say things. I used to be alone all the time"* (IS5)

*"I have difficulties in mixing with the other students. In the class, I feel like I'm isolated from the other students"* (IS20)

*"It's always hard to make friends. I have only one or two friends among the local people. "I don't want to be friends with anyone but black people"* (IS4)

*"I was very distant to the classroom in my first year. My friends were nice and they were inviting me to join them but since it was the first year, I always felt strange, I felt like a*

*stranger. Talking, walking down the street, I always felt bad. I kept saying to myself "I'm in another country" but over time I got used to it."* (IS18)

The most important problem experienced by foreign students is socio-cultural adaptation. The biggest stress source of university students is breaking away from the family environment, adapting to the very different life, meeting the values of the new friends, and confronting different cultural values.

*"I feel like I am an outsider often, because of what the Turkish students are talking about. They are talking about politics, Tv programs and other stuff that I do not know very much about. I would like to be involved in the conversation with them more, but I am hesitant to ask for any clarification. The other thing is that I don't understand the history or the culture. I feel like an outsider and I feel I am behind and this makes me anxious"* (IS5).

*"I don't know if there is any difference or not, but I am usually with those from my own country. We rented a house with them. I prefer to do homework in class with my friends."* (IS19).

*"I felt that local students did not care about me. I felt socially isolated or marginalized from them sometime."* (IS13)

*"I don't really have any difficulties adjusting with the culture norms but have a few difficulties adjusting to different social groups."* (IS16)

*"Being a black woman and being exposed to others' discrimination ended me. Is that what you call burnout?"* (IS 9)

*"I feel really tired and unhappy or maybe even helpless. if that's what you mean, yes, I'm burnout"* (IS 19)

These experiences can negatively affect international students' adaptation and discourage international students from making friends with locals (Smith & Khawaja 2011). They felt unwelcomed. A high number of international students tend to group up with people from their own culture and not interact with people of different cultures (Zhai, 2004). This phenomenon can cause numerous issues including lack of integration, higher dropout rates and racism.

*"Sometimes I notice that they're looking at me because of the clothes I'm wearing. In such moments, I feel lonely. But then I tell myself that I don't care, these are my cultural motives."* (IS5)

*"We apply our own traditions and customs among ourselves. Every two months, food comes to us from Indonesia. We are still not used to the food here."* (IS2)

*"Local students don't talk to us much, they don't want to. We cannot talk to them much, we can only have basic conversations like "how are you, hello, how are the lessons". They look out for each other. They talk to each other. When we say something, they say "ok, okay" and they leave. They already have their own groupes and clicks, and I'm just hanging out by myself or with my own friends. "* (IS16)

*"I feel as if everyone on campus is looking at me. I don't understand if they love me or hate me Sometimes I feel very lonely. I have very few Turkish friends. I usually spend time with other Nigerians outside of my classes."*(IS3)

*"I was verbally abused several times outside of the campus. Sometimes they ask me very funny things. Sometimes I think they make fun of me."*(IS 9)

### Language

International students named language proficiency as their most challenging problem. Language proficiency barrier affects international students' academic performance and social adjustment. For those who are attending universities where courses are taught in a language in which the student is not fluent, language barriers can be a major burnout factor. Students have to deal with learning the language while trying to learn as much they can in class. In the academic domain, international students with language problems cannot participate actively in the classroom environment.

*"In graduate courses where oral classroom participation is highly valued, international graduate students compete with native speakers as well as worry about sounding competent and intelligent in a foreign language."* (IS12)

Academically, language barriers have adverse impacts on assignment writing, understanding lectures, examinations and participating actively in the classroom.

*"I am really passive in classroom. Although I can understand speeches, I do not have enough grammar to answer, participate in discussions and express my true thoughts on the topic. Also, sometimes it makes me uneasy to feel the sarcastic or the "enough shut up" gaze of the class on me because of my ideas."* (IS20)

*"The only thing that consumes me is speaking Turkish. Unless I can express myself, I lose myself and become lonely. I feel helpless."*(IS12)

*"Because I can only speak a little Turkish, there may be problems in formal affairs and sometimes in lessons"* (IS15)

*"I had problems with language, culture, social life and lessons."* (IS9)

The language difficulty may decrease international students' self confidence, ability to engage in social interactions with the local and academic efficacy.

*"Presentation days are scaring for me. Not being able to express myself is very weary".* (IS16)

*"I understand and can follow the conversations most of the time in class. I work 3 times more than my classmates to succeed but sometimes I don't get the results I want."* (IS7)

*"Unfortunately my language proficiency is not sufficient for the academic purposes."* (IS13)

The results of this study is consistent with Poyrazli et. al. (2002) who demonstrated that language competency of international students was a predictor of their adjustment and ability to make friends and interact with locals.

*"I cannot make friends because I do not speak the language well enough. My social life is interrupted by language. I feel left out when I don't understand the jokes and allusions".* (IS19)

### Financial Problems

Although most international students are financing their study themselves or receiving scholarships either from their own country or from Turkish government, they experience high rated financial vulnerabilities. Inadequate financial power and difficulties in meeting monthly inadequacy and social life may cause and affect burnout. International students can not work legally according to Turkish laws. For this, many students work illegally in part-time jobs with

very low wages. Students with economical problems cannot devote enough time to lessons and homework as they have to work.

*"Studying and working at the same time exhausted me. I just wish I had the chance to spend all of my energy just for training". (IS12)*

*"I cannot eat very well due to lack of money. Our house conditions are not considered good. Despite this, I find myself successful as I get the educational opportunity." (IS6)*

*"I have a limited budget. I have to go along with it. This is hardly enough for me and I can't do many things I want to do." (IS1)*

Students' economic difficulties affect many issues from providing course materials to healthy diet. These findings overlap with the research results of Poyrazlı & Grahame, (2007) which stated that financial problems are experienced by the majority of international students, with contributing factors including work restrictions in the host country and substantially greater expenses.

*"One of the reasons I am alone is because of the lack of money. I have no extra money to drink a coffee with my friends." (IS18)*

*"My family is sending. This city seems a little expensive to me. Especially there is a problem in transportation and accommodation. I could not find a place in the state dormitory. I stayed in a private one which is quite expensive (IS8) .*

*" Here I am trying to make it to be made up. I have to eat, I have money for the trip, there are additional expenses. I have a hard time getting along. My family sends it." (IS7)*

Although it is generally thought that international students originate from relatively wealthy and privileged families, this is not correct for the majority of international students at this research. Most of the international students stated that they had economic problems. It is determined that the amount of scholarship received by international students is quite low.

*"I don't have any other income, except for the money sent from Endonesia. Text boks and rents are more expensive than what I can afford.(IS2)*

*"We cannot get scholarships, this creates problems. This city is too expensive for a student. Our place is cheaper." (IS10)*

Several studies (Poyrazlı & Grahame, 2007; Sherry et al., 2010) show that the majority of international students experience financial problems or at least feel financial anxiety which is also true for his research.

*"This place is really expensive. Part-time job opportunities are very limited. I could not go to my country for 3 years. We live 7 people in the same house." (IS20)*

*"When my parents are sending money, they say "we sent a lot" but it is not enough for me here." (IS8)*

### **Homesickness**

Homesickness is a condition caused by prolonged periods of being away from one's home. International students are more exposed to more extreme versions due to the considerable physical and cultural distance between their home and the university. Consequently, homesickness can be more weakening for them. Almost all of the international students stated that they longed for home. At the point of homesickness, students stated that they miss their families, friends and hometown, respectively. Not only cultural norms and

language barriers, but also the nature of relationships in the host country may also obstruct international students' ability to establish friendships.

*"I miss my family very much. There were times when I wanted to return but after all, I put up with my own will."* (IS14)

*"I miss everything in my country."* (IS15,6,7) *"I especially want to go back during holidays"* (IS 13)

*"I felt left out and lonely".* (IS13, 19,10)

International students generally feel lonely because they lose the social network they had in their home country and have problems building new social contacts (McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Sherry et al., 2010; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Finding new friends and building a new social network, where they feel comfortable and safe take time.

*"The first semester was the worst, because that was my first time away from my family for a long time. Getting used to the shortened or mutilated forms of my name, which is always pronounced wrong or stopped at halfway with a wild stare was another"* (IS10).

*"I miss my family and my friends"* (IS2,3,4,5,19,20).

*"I miss my home so much that I have dreams? I haven't been home for 4 years. I miss my mother's meals and my crowded relatives."* (IS13).

*"Everything was different here at first and then I got used to it."* (IS2). *"I had trouble at first."* (IS8,10,11,12,16). *"I had difficulties but got used to it."* (IS 1,11,14,17,18)

One of the ways in which international students can overcome homesickness is connecting with other people from their own culture. Comparable results were reported by (McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Sawir, et al., 2008) who examined experiences of loneliness in international students.

*"It's as if I haven't broken with my own country and my friends. This is both very good and bad. On the one hand, I do not long for a homeland. On the other hand, I cannot form a friend group here. Could this be the reason why I'm burning out?"* (IS15 )

*"I have never stayed away from home until I came here and it was a big challenge for me".* (IS 1)

*"I have a very few Turkish friends but mostly my friends are from my country".* (IS 6)

#### 4.DISCUSSION

Attending university in a host country is a very stressful experience for some international students due to high academic demands, balancing of study, work, and personal life; and financial pressures. International students can experience substantial levels of burnout.

In this study, international students feel exhausted due to their language difficulties. This finding is consistent with (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Bonifacci, Candria & Contento, 2007; Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2004; Marcos-Llinas & Garau, 2009; Humphries, 2011) research results demonstrating that lower levels of language proficiency is a predictor of burnout. In terms of their academic lives, language barriers diminish international students' ability to participate in class. Ultimately, such barriers may cause academic failure (Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007). In terms of social lives, language barriers have a negative impact on students' social and cultural adjustment (McLachlan & Justice, 2009;

Smith & Khawaja, 2011). In addition to academic and social issues, students with language difficulties can experience social isolation, loneliness, depression and burnout.

Students who suffered from academic burnouts have lower motivation to do required work (e.g., coursework and dissertation) and eventual dropout (Lin & Huang, 2014). Student burnout can lead to higher absenteeism, lower motivation to do required work, a higher percentage of dropout. In the study group where this study was conducted, it was found that only 13% of international students completed their education on time. Approximately 60% of the students complete their education in the maximum time given to them; 30% of them cannot finish and move away from school.

Adapting to a new social environment and cultural norms is a big challenge for most international students. The experience of culture shock is reportedly prevalent among international students as they adjust to the sociocultural differences between home and host countries (Zhou et al., 2008). International students encounter various other social and cultural problems as they try to adjust different cultural norms and social patterns (McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Sherry et al., 2010; Yeh & Inose, 2003). International students experience difficulty in socializing and establishing friendships with locals and other international students, which in turn affects international students' sociocultural and psychological adaptation (Townsend & Poh, 2008). In addition to cultural misunderstandings, prejudices or discrimination are also noted as another potential social issue that negatively influences the students' social and psychological adjustment (Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazlı & Grahame, 2007).

Extant research suggests that international students also face psychological problems such as homesickness, loneliness, social isolation (Kegel, 2009; McLachlan and Justice, 2009; Poyrazlı and Lopez, 2007; Sawir et al., 2007). Moreover, students who cannot socialize successfully or who maintain weak social ties due to low language proficiency and cultural adaptation are more likely to experience burnout (Sawir et al., 2007).

## 5. SUGGESTIONS

The findings from this study have theoretical and pedagogical significance. Theoretically, this study adds a component to the existing literature in study burnout among international students. The practical application is also noticeable. International students need more intensive orientation to understand the 'new' culture's demands, values, beliefs, socially appropriate behaviors. Also, extracurricular activities for international students help them to get over the initial cultural shock and help their adjustment (Poyrazlı and Lopez, 2007).

Despite the limitations, the present study contributes to enhancing the existing understanding of international students' burnout in Turkey. This study provides clinical implications. Future studies may endorse a longitudinal design. We suggest assessing international students' motivations prior to departure for – or immediately after arrival in – the host country, to examine the predictive relations of academic burnout. Future studies may utilize multiple resources such as interview data from students' friends, family, and significant others in order to accurately measure burnout to study abroad.



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