Being an International Student in Turkey During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract
This study aims at identifying the experiences of international students from different countries studying at Turkish universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. A phenomenological qualitative study was designed accordingly. The sample consists of 20 international students selected using the maximum variation sampling technique. An interview form prepared by the researchers to determine the experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic was used to collect data. The data were collected through online interviews (Zoom) conducted with the participants. Content analysis was applied to the data. MAXQDA 2020 software package was used for content analysis. The obtained results revealed that related to the pandemic, international students in Turkey had some positive and negative experiences in their social life, communication with acquaintances, psychological condition, education, and travel.
Keywords: Covid-19, International Students, Turkey, Experiences, Phenomenology

Introduction

Social developments cause changes in the lives of large masses and affect people's lives in a variety of areas such as health, communication, tourism, etc. Similarly, the impact such developments also cause changing and shaping educational activities. While some of these developments are facilitating, some might cause divergent problems. With the emergence of the Covid-19 virus in 2019, all countries around the world have been affected and therefore, the world has to deal with unpredicted challenges. The Covid-19 virus has already had a huge social impact on societies and people encountered many difficulties in various areas. This pandemic even shut down the entire world in the age of global mobility (Kraemer et al., 2020). Countries have started to implement some measures to prevent or reduce the spread of the virus (WHO, 2020). Within the scope of these measures, flights have been canceled worldwide or limited to continue the fight against the Covid-19 virus (BBC, 2020); shopping centers, urban public places, and restaurants have closed (Rith & Piantanakulchai, 2020). The measures taken to minimize the effects of the virus have also been implemented in the field of education.

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International students studying abroad were also negatively affected by Covid-19 measures. Since these students had to meet all their needs such as education, health, accommodation, and socializing in thehost country, they faced many problems in different fields as well as education.These students have complied with the regulations applicable to local students for their educational activities; however, there are not many arrangements about what these students do or what they should do regarding specific issues such as accessing health service, accommodation, food access and returning to their countries.

Theoretical Framework
Education During the Covid-19 Pandemic

As of April 2020, schools have been closed in many countries (UNESCO, 2020b). According to March 2021 data, 26 countries had fully closed their schools and 163,921,494 students worldwide had no access to education (UNESCO, 2021). The school closures in this period caused concerns regarding educational continuity (Wang et al., 2020). Accordingly, instead of face-to-face classes, educational activities took a new shape and distance education was implemented in many countries (Alan et al., 2020).

With the adaptation of distance education methods,someuncertaintieshave emerged regarding the planning of these educational activities. UNESCO introduced some recommendations for countries about implementing distance education practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. These recommendations are: (1) Examining the readiness and choosing the most relevant tools, (2) ensuring inclusion of the distance learning programs, (3) protecting data privacy and data security, (4) prioritizing solutions to address psychosocial challenges before teaching, (5) planning the study schedule of the distance learning programs, (6) providing support to teachers and parents on the use of digital tools, (7) blending appropriate approaches and limiting the number of applications and platform, (8) developing distance learning rules and monitoring students' learning process, (9) defining the duration of distance learning units based on students' self-regulation skilland (10)

creating communities and enhancing connection (UNESCO, 2020a). Accordingly, universities planned their distance education programs considering such recommendations and implemented educational activities ensuring access to education for all (Chang et al., 2020). However, as identifying and implementing distance education practices as an alternative or the only method of educational continuity, some difficulties emerged. Two main problems have stand out above all others:lack of socializing in distance education and insufficient information about how to interact (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). International students studying abroad are also an important group that is affected bythe Covid-19 pandemic and distance education practices.

International Students During the Covid-19 Pandemic and Situation in Turkey

About a one-year period since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, about 5,3 million international students worldwide are stuck in host countries (Chen et al., 2020) and these students had some concerns regarding when and how to return totheir home countries (Hu et al., 2020). In addition to these difficulties experienced by international students, the measures implemented by countries such as school disclosures and lockdowns caused students to experience other serious problems such as emotional distress, social and psychological disorders,disruption in personal relationships and reduced academic success (Firang, 2020), as well as anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Iancheva et al., 2020). It is quite likely that international students face mental health disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic as they have more tendency to have mental disordersthanlocalstudentsevevnnormalconditions (Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, distance education incurssome additional costs such as computer, software, and internet (Daşcı Sönmez & Cemaloğlu, 2021). International students also have problems related to language, internet and computer access as they are one of the disadvantaged groups compared to local students (Motiejūnaitė-Schulmeister & Crosier, 2020). Therefore, the conditions of international students should be improved considering the pandemicand they should be supported for their

needs. However, aside from providing the students with the necessary support, according to Ma and Miller (2020), international students were obligated to choose one of these two options: staying in the host country where they receive education provided that accepting social discrimination or returning to their home country. However, other issues such as what these students will do if they choose to stay in the host country or how they can return to their home country are overlooked. Similarly, Hu et al. (2020) stated that the daily routine of international students is severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and both governments and colleges acted too slowly for taking the necessary steps.

Turkey has become one of the most preferred countries by international students due to some driving factors such as economic power, geographical location, being a center for trade in its region, rise in the socio-economic status, widespread education network, and divergent opportunities offered to foreign students. The number of international students increased from 48,169 to 185,047 from the year 2014 to 2020 (CHE, 2021). Turkey is ranked tenth in the list of the countries with the highest number of foreign students and the number of foreign students in the country is expected to exceed 220,000 in 2021 (CHE, 2020d). Despite the reduction in the number of international students in many countries during the pandemic, the continuous increase in the number of Turkey' international students is an important indicator that foreign students want to receive education in this country. However, although their numbers tend to increase, both Turkey and the international students in Turkey have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the coronavirus emerged in Turkey, some measures have been implemented. One of the most important measures has been implemented in the education system since students interact closely with many different people and groups during educational practices. In March 2020, education in universities was temporarily suspended in accordance with the decision taken by the Council of Higher Education in Turkey (CHE, 2020a). However, since the complete closure of universities caused some other problems, some alternative solutions were discussed and it was decided to implement a distance education model,

which is generally used to remove the barriers to the education of disadvantaged groups (Lee, 2020, s. 187). Accordingly, the Higher Education Council has taken a new decision on March 18, 2019, and the distance education system has been implemented in Turkish universities (CHE, 2020c). As many universities around the world started using virtual learning environments for their educational activities (Nurfaidah et al., 2020), all universities in Turkey started to carry out educational practices through online platforms. In this regard, international students also took their classes through distance education. However, a circular was sent to universities considering that international students would also face difficulties in some particular areas such as accommodation and health apart from educational activities and therefore, it was stated that necessary steps should be taken to prevent problems that international students may experience in these areas (CHE, 2020b). With the measures taken and practices implemented, international students continued their education in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Relevant Literature

A literature survey revealed that some studies have investigated conditions of international students in different countries during the Covid-19 pandemic from different aspects. Chen et al. (2020) examined the mental health of international students and Firang (2020) investigated the effect of Covid-19 on international students in Canada. Furthermore, many studies have examined conditions of international students in this period: Hu et al. (2020) examined the condition of Chinese international students, Jang et al. (2021) international students in South Korea, Ma and Miller (2020) examined the condition of international students at China during the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, some studies obtained international students' opinions regarding the Covid-19 and the distance education practices implemented in this period: Li et al. (2020) examined international students' experiences, Nurfaidah et al. (2020) and Puspitasari et al. (2020) investigated international students' views of distance education, Saatcıand Aksu (2020) examined metaphors of international students studying at tourism programs. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have

examined the experiences of international students in Turkey about meeting their needs of education, communication and social life during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not possible for international students, who are studying at different countries around the world, to be unaffected by the restrictions and measures implemented during the pandemic. Gathering information about the experiences of international students is important while planning further policies and measures. Such research will reveal international students' experiences and situations. Therefore, information collected from such experiences will assist in shaping the future of education. In this regard, we believe that our study will provide an important contribution to the literature as it reveals the experiences of international students in Turkey.

This study aims at determining the experiences of international students studying in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, answers will be sought to the following questions:

- What are the international students' social life status during the pandemic?
- What isthe situation regarding the communication of international students with their environment during the pandemic?
- How did travel restrictions implemented during the pandemic affect international students?
- How did the pandemic affect international students' psychological condition?
- What are the educational experiences of international students during the pandemic?
- What are the expectations of international students for the post-pandemic period?

Method
Research Design
Due to the exploratory nature of the research, a phenomenological qualitative study was designed. Phenomenology draws inferences by combining phenomena or experiences (Bodner & Orgill, 2007). The study tries to examine international students' experiences during the pandemic and how students make sense of the world around them.

Sample
The sample of this study consists of 20 international students in various programs of Turkey's universities. The maximum variation sampling was used to select participants. According to Patton (2014), this method allows identifying the specific dimensions of each situation present in the sampling and also identifying the common patterns and their values among situationswith significantly different characteristics. By using maximum variation sampling, specific dimensions ofinternational students studying in various programs of the different universities in Turkey were examined.The authors paid attention to select students from a wide variety of programs and countries. The information about the participant students is given in Table1:

Table 1 Participants' Characteristics

Gender	f	Department	f	Country	f
Male	12	Theology	3	Egypt	3
Female	8	Business	3	North Macedonia	3
		Computer engineering	2	Tajikistan	3
		Medicine	2	Palestine	2
		International relations	2	Morocco	2
		Turkish Preparation	2	Afghanistan	1
		Computer Teaching	1	Somalia	1
		Turkish language and literature	1	Romania	1
		Dentist	1	USA	1
		Molecular Biology	1	Algeria	1
		Management and organization	1	Indonesia	1
		Mechatronic Engineering	1	Syria	1

Data Collection
To determine international students' experiences during the pandemic, an interview form prepared by the authors was used. This interview form was finalized according to the opinions of 3 experts in Turkish education. A pilot interview was conducted with 2 students. While the initial form includes 8

questions, the number of questions was reduced to 6 in the final form. The students involved in the study voluntarily and responded to the interview form through an online meeting platform (Zoom). The interviews were transcribed by the authors and the transcripts were verified by the students and the credibility of the study was ensured. The required permissions to conduct this study were obtained from the ethical board before the collection of data.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis includes data reduction and interpretation processes to determine main themes and concepts from large volumes of qualitative data (Patton, 2014). A qualitative data analysis tool, MAXQDA 2020 software package was used for content analysis. The interview forms were examined with content analysis, coded by the researchers and the themes were identified. To determine the reliability, consistencies of the codes were examined. Accordingly, Cohen's kappa values were calculated as a measure of interpretation agreement (Viera & Garrett, 2005) and the agreement value was found to be at the .78 level. To determine internal reliability, quotes were made from students' views and presented in the Findings section. To ensure the validity of the study, expert opinions were received and attention paid that the findings obtained are consistent with the conceptual framework.

Findings

The findings from the experiences of international students studying in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic are presented in this section. The international students stated their experiences during the pandemic using the themes of social life, communication, travel/transportation, psychological state, education, and expectations.

Social Life
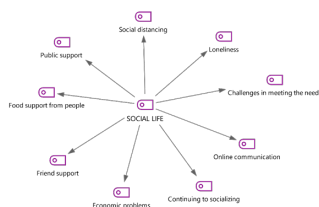
Figure 1 Social Life of International Students in the Pandemic Process

Significant changes have occurred in the social lives of international students during the pandemic. International students had some positive experiences of social life such as social distancing (15), online communication (5), friend support (5), continuing to socializing (4), food support from people (3), public support (2) as well as some other experiences such as loneliness (6), challenges in meeting the needs (1), economic problems (1). A majority of the students stated that they follow social distancing rules. Most of them tried to continue their social relationships through online communication. Some students mentioned that they received support from their friends and society. Some indicated that the pandemic did not affect socializing. A considerable number of students experienced loneliness during this period. Some students were faced with various social and economic problems. These experiences pointed out that international students experienced significant changes in their social lives during the pandemic and a new lifestyle has begun for them. One of the most important changes brought on by the pandemic is that avoiding physical contact and being in closed environments due to social distancing. In this regard, a student's comments included:

P6: I am currently staying in a student dormitory. Naturally, being away from my family and friends as well as dormitory conditions are somewhat effective. As we have to comply with the social distancing and mask-wearing rules, how should I say, frankly, I'm very affected socially. During this time, I could not see anyone.

Since people could not make face-to-face contact, they had to continue communication through online ways. One of the students' view is important here:

P1: We could stay in touch through social media. We couldn't go out much already, we could only go to places like groceries. So, we communicate through only WhatsApp, Instagram.

Students received support from their friends during the pandemic. P10 described that his/her friends gave him moral support and helped to overcome this period as:

P10: I received mostly moral support in this period. That is, by talking to my friends, having heart-to-heart talks, sharing our experiences, asking about ourselves, thus I get moral support.

Social relationships were decreased significantly during the pandemic.Nevertheless, P18, who continued human relationships and live together with his/her friends in these conditions stated his/her opinions as follows:

P18: I stayed at home with my friends. That is, we are 10 persons, two Turks and eight Indonesians. So, we chit-chat every day and eat together.

Furthermore, international students were faced with economic problems. In this regard, they received various support from people around them. P3 mentioned that some people provided food aid them:

P3: During the pandemic, some people with real positive feelings towards foreigners provided food aid at first. That is, they provide food aid to all foreigners around.

Among international students, some of them stayed in quarantine and had difficult times during this period. P13 stated that since there was nobody to meet his/her needs, he/she had to go out during his/her quarantine period that is not allowed outside:

P13: I stayed in my home at Zonguldak. However, I don't know anyone. There is no one to bring me supplies.That is, they call around 11.00, 12.00, to learn whether I'm ill or not and I'm at home or outside. They didn't ask anything else. Well, who will bring me supplies? They didn't ask this. I have to buy supplies.They call just after I went out. They ask, Are you at home? It looks like you are not at home. They say you are in quarantine, why did you go out. Ok, I'm not allowed outside by who will bring me supplies, did you even think about that?

Communication

Figure 2 Communication of International Students in the Pandemic Process

The pandemic has deeply affected the communication of international students The students stated their experiences about communication through the dimensions of restricted communication (10), online communication (7), social media (4), continuity of communication (3), unable to meet new people (2), unable to see Turkish students (2), continuity of communication with foreigners in Turkey (2), establishing new friendships (1). Among these experiences, restricted communication and online communication stand out. Fewer students stated that they could continue communication and established new friendships. In general, the communication of international students is significantly restricted. The views of students who stated that their communication restricted in the new period of Covid-19 as follows:

P11: Some students do not talk much, that is, they don't talk in the group, they don't text back... They just watch the lessons and never speak. So, I couldn't establish new friendships. Just a few friends...

International students continued online communication with their families and friends. P19 mentioned that he/she communicated with his/her friends via a platform they created on the internet:

P19: We conduct activities all time, we even established a platform, the Medix Platform. That is, we might not able to make face-to-face talks but we will definitely see our friends through the internet.

International students kept in touch with their friends through social media. One of these students, P3 stated accordingly:

P3: I communicate through social, media, social media networks. We could not talk face-to-face. Always, that is, we could never meet personally. You know, through phone, we can meet only on social media.

International students who kept in touch with their friends could not continue communication with Turkish students and international students during this period. International students mostly communicated among themselves. P2, a student who experienced such a situation mentioned his/her feelings as follows:

P2: I was already staying in the student dormitory
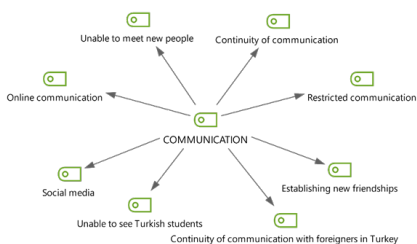
*but at first, there were also Turkish students who could not return their home. Then, it was decided that all they would mandatorily leave thedormitory. Then, only international students remained in the dormitory. I did not meet much with Turkish students during the pandemic, because everyone was at their own home. So, there were only us. That is, we were meeting with international students.*

Students established new friendships on the internet during the pandemic since they could not continue normal relationships as before. P17 stated that he/she established new friendships through an online platform based on voluntary participation:

P17: I started to spend more time with my new friends. So, sort of, it's like old friends are forgotten. I started seeing them only every two months, once a month via WhatsApp. But with new friends, that is, those in that volunteer program, the program forced us, we were joining, so we were meeting with them.

Travel Restrictions
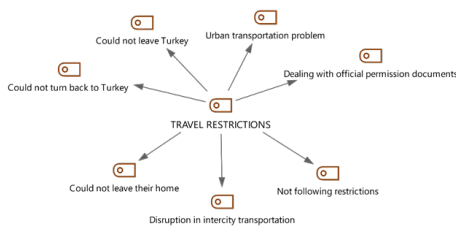
Figure 3 Travel Restrictions of International Students in the Pandemic Process

As the number of Covid-19 casesincrease, travel restrictions were implemented from time to time. Such restrictions caused international students to face some challenges. Accordingly, international students experienced such situations: disruption in intercity transportation (7), could not leave Turkey (5), could not leave their home (3), not following restrictions (2), urban transportation problem (1), could not turn back to Turkey (1), dealing with official permissiondocuments (1). International students were mostly faced with transportation problems within the country. Some students mentioned that they had difficulties regarding turning back to their home country. However, such situations resulted mostly from temporary measures implemented during some periods with higher number of Covid-19 cases. Many international students mentioned restrictions in intercity transportation during the pandemic and they couldn't leave the city they live in. Accordingly, P12's views are as follows:

P12: I have friends in İstanbul. And sometimes my cousin used to come to visit me. This is good for me, I even go during the lecture period, I used to visit İstanbul always. Because I could have a family atmosphere there, that is, there is a kid and my friend, so I enjoy it very much. However, it is not allowed and I couldn't. Of course, I miss there, I want to go there but I followed the rules.

The travel restrictions caused some changes in international travel. In some periods, travel between countries has become difficult. P1 stated that he/she couldn't return to his/her home country in this period and had to stay in Turkey saying:

P1: Actually, I was planning to go to Morocco when this coronavirus emerged, but I could not go, the airport was closed. I stayed in Bursa, I had nowhere else to go. I had two options: going to Morocco or staying in Bursa. I could not go to Morocco so, I stayed in Bursa.

With the measures implemented around the world, it was tried to control the spread speed of the coronavirus. However, some international students stated that they didn't follow the measures implemented and continued their daily life. Accordingly, P13's views are as follows:

P13: I said that I didn't care. I said I would go, I would go wherever I want. I went to Istanbul a few times,I went to Ankara a few times and came back here. But I haven't been out for two months.

Psychological State
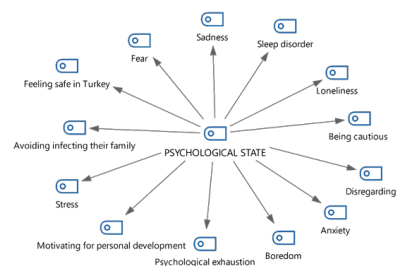
Figure 4 Psychological Status of International Students in the Pandemic Process

Social restrictions and the spread of the coronavirus have affected the psychological status of the students. The international students explained their psychological status with these words: fear (6), psychological exhaustion (5), boredom (5), loneliness (5), being cautious (3), anxiety (2), stress(2), sadness (1), sleep disorder (1), avoiding infecting their family (1), motivating for personal development (1), feeling safe in Turkey (1), disregarding (1). Considering overall opinions, it can be argued that international students had negative feelings and they were affected deeply by the pandemic. Especially, some concepts such as fear, exhaustion, getting bored, and loneliness stand out. On the other hand, fewer students stated that the pandemic period did not cause any problem for them. P10, who stated that he/she had a fear of infectionas follows:

P10: I started being more cautious in this period. Frankly, I was more scared, that is, because of this virus. I did not go out often. As such, relationships were affected, that is, negatively. I tried to be more cautious, I mean, when I was going somewhere.

In addition to international students whose daily life has changed seriously, some students experiencedpsychological exhaustion. P2 stated that this long-lasting period had an important impact on their psychological status saying:

P2: We entered a new period, there was a period of boredom, now there is tiring psychology. People have relaxed a little these days. It wasvery hard psychologically. But we tried to console ourselves with hobbies, activities and sports. We tried to improve our psychology just a little bit.

It seems that staying at home always caused international students to experience boredom and loneliness. Students have negative feelings about spending time alone. Among these students, P1 stated that he/she was bored because of staying at home and P17 mentioned he/she felt loneliness as follows:

P1: In the first days, I was sitting at home, it was ok. However, people get bored when they stay at home all the time. You spend all the time on the phone, after that, I don't know, you're having problems withsleeping. So, it started to become a little boring, one gets bored. Therefore, we pray

for the end of this coronavirus and return to our normal lives.

P17: The pandemic has affected deeply, our friendships, environment, to be honest, I started feeling lonely.

It was stated that the pandemic period not only caused negative emotions but also provided motivation for personal development. P14 stated that he/she learned new hobbies, read books and was pleased with this period as follows:

P14: I try to find new hobbies while I'm home and try to learn new stuff, I started reading books. So, I think it's getting better slowly. So, it was good, that is, it was a discipline.

Although the pandemic period includes many difficulties, some of the international students living in Turkey stated that they feel safe. P9 thinks that the fight with the pandemic was managed well in Turkey thanks to the measures implemented and he/she feel safe in Turkey saying:

P9: In my opinion,Turkey handled the pandemic literallyperfectlyamong other countries around the world. Really, I feel safe in Turkey. I had no problem. I understood the lockdown, followed it and did not go out. Then, when allowed, I went out. But I was not really afraid, there was no such stress. I talk to my friends, I have many friends in different countries, especially in Europe, it was much, much worse there.

Education
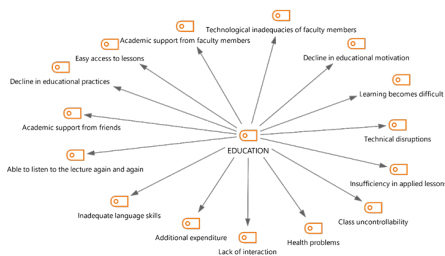
Figure 5 Educational Status of International Students in the Pandemic Process

Like many other countriesaround the world, Turkey implemented distance education methodsduring the pandemic. During this period, students collected rich experiences as they participated in distance education practices for

a long time. As these students live in Turkey to receive education, the field that these students are most affected is education. The following themes were obtained regarding the international students' experiences with distance education: technical disruptions (14), lack of interaction(10), academic support from friends (7), able to listen to the lecture again and again (4), inadequate language skills (4), learning becomes difficult (4), academic support from faculty members (3), decline in educational practices (3), decline in educational motivation(3). Technical disruptions and lack of communication experienced during this period was the major problem perceived by students. During these difficult times, receiving support from friends and faculty members is very valuable for international students. Although there were some positive situations, international students were mostly faced with some challenges.The most important of these problems is the technical problems. A majority of the students mentioned technical problems in distance education. Regarding this issue, a student stated that he/she experienced a connection lost problem and he/she could not follow his/her courses completely because the voices were not heard properly:

P10:Yes, internet connection was lost sometimes. There were some voices interrupted. For example, suddenly, when plugging in headphones, the speaker and microphone do not work. Such problems. One day, I could not even attend the class because there was no internet connection. So, I missed the course and some courses are not recorded. That is, we were missing classes.

Although there are some different practices in distance education, courses are taught mostly synchronous. Although synchronous distance education was implemented, P9 stated that interaction during the lecture is limited since distance communication is not the face-to-face communication as follows:

P9: I do not really like distance education. Why? Because it is very important to participate in the course personally, to meet with the teacher, to look directly at his/her face, this is important at least for me. This is how I feel. Because now, we're discussing, we're doing some research. It would be better if we do it face-to-face, right?

It would be better. Because in this way, people see and talk to each other. You will be more comfortable; you see their gestures.

International students stated that they received important support from their friends during their education. One of these students, P15 stated that his/her friends helped him/her in the subjects that he/she didn't understand and supported him/her for assignments saying:

P15: For example, when I don't understand the lecture, I have many Turkish friends, they help me when Ididn't understand. And also, I help them but mostly they help me. For example, they help me with the assignments that I didn't understand.

Although some difficulties experienced during distance education, some students stated that this education method has some advantages.One of these students, P6 commented that the courses are recorded and the possibility of listening the courses whenever they wantis important for them:

P6: For example, we have the possibility of listening the lessons whenever we want. In my opinion, this is its best aspect. In the past, when we were in school, we were listening. There was no chance of repeat. As distance education includes recorded courses, we could listen to the course whenever we want.

International students stated that their Turkish language skills are not sufficient to understand the lectures. Among these students, P16 stated that he/she understand face-to-face courses better however, his/her Turkish language proficiencyis not sufficient to understand the online lectures:

P16: It was negatively affected us, those studying at colleges. I got C1level (Turkish language), although I had C1 level, I couldn't understand thelectures.Because even Turkish students don't know some words. We are foreigners, how can we know them?I was understanding face-to-face lectures. However, currently, when a lesson is over, I did not understand 60% of it, I understood only 40%. That is, the things I didn't understand are more than those I understand.

Another impact of distance education on students is motivation. Some of the students stated that their motivation decreased with distance education. Among these students, comments by P17 included:

P17: Currently, through online education, for example, we have a 2-hour lecture in college. You can listen the first hour well but your motivation decreases in the second hour.

Since distance education is carried out through visual technological tools, it has some effect on eye health. In this regard, P6 commented that he/she experienced eye problems because of the devices used to follow online lectures:

P6: Apart from that, we constantly listened to lessons from phones or computers, so we always used them, how to say, it has affected our eye health, I can say that as a negative aspect.

Expectations
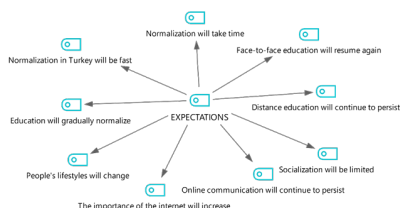
Figure 6 Expectations of International Students in the Pandemic Process

International students are waiting for the post-pandemic period and accordingly, they mentioned some opinions for the future. Regarding the expectations, students mentioned the following opinions: normalization will take time (10), socialization will be limited (4), distance education will continue to persist(4), face-to-face education will resume again (2), the importance of the internet will increase (2), normalization in Turkey will be fast (1), online communication will continue to persist (1), education will gradually normalize (1), people's lifestyles will change (1). According to many students, when the pandemic is over returning to normal life will take time and distance education will continue to exist. On the other hand, a limited number of students stated that face-to-face education will resume and normalization in Turkey will be fast. A student explained that normalization will take time with the following words:

P20: Sir, they will not resume easily. So, it has a big impact. We live under stress due to this virus for many months, a year or a year and a half. It will not be easy to resume, it takes at least around a year.

It was considered that education activities will continue to be implemented through distance education in the post-Covid-19 period. P10 explained that the theoretical courses will continue to be implemented through distance education as follows:

P10: Sir, in my opinion, applied medicine and engineering will be first... Face-to-face classes might start in colleges with applied courses. I think online education will continue to be implemented in colleges where most courses are theoretical.

Furthermore, in addition to the views that distance education will continue to be implemented, some students stated that face-to-face education will resume. One of these students, P11 explained that traditional educational activities will resume and provided through face-to-face classes as follows:

P11: It will continue normally. In my opinion, everything is normal. Because teachers want face-to-face education, it is easier for them. Everything will return to its normal state.

During the pandemic, the role of the internet in human life has increased even more. It is thought that the internet's importance will increase in the post-pandemic period as it is used extensively in many areas and the facilities it provides. P14 stated that the internet offers various facilities and its importance is well-understood today:

P14: In my opinion, our society attached great importance to university. However, today it is realized that it can be carried out online and affected everything in an easy direction. We noticed that how technology is important. For example, in my job, I learned how restaurants run online. So, schools might be also online... Besides, I know somebody, they do online internship. It has gone this far; education and business can be done online as well. I think there are more opportunities and... Thoughts change that is, in a good direction.

Moreover, P9 believed that Turkey will return to normal life rapidly when the pandemic is over and people are more suitable for this situation:

P9: In my opinion, Turkey will return to normal life more quickly. On the other hand, it will be more difficult in Europe. Why? Because in Europe, people got used to being afraid of each

other. There is no such thing here. That is, people do not afraid of each other.

Discussion

In this study examining the experiences of international students from different countries studying at Turkish universities during the Covid-19 pandemic, some themes were identified such as social life, communication, travel restrictions, psychological condition, language use, education, and expectations. Regarding thetheme of social life, international students' experiences of social life in Turkey during the pandemic were examined. The international students stated their experiences of social life through the following codes: following social distancing, online communication, friend support, continuing to socialize, and public support. According to the students' experiences, they had less contact with people, physical contact was minimized, they communicated with people around them through online tools, and received important support from the public. Furthermore, some students had difficulties meeting their needs since they were lonely as they live in a foreign country. Students try to get used to new social life and overcome this period with the support of people around.A literature survey showed that similar findings were obtained in other studies. In a study conducted by Sarıand Nayır (2020), it was revealed that students had social problems as their living standards are restricted with the social isolation; Saatcıand Aksu (2020) determined that the Covid-19 virus had a negative impact on the social life of students; Chirikovand Soria (2020) found that students' interaction decreased in this period. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2020) highlighted that international students deprived of social support during the pandemic,Chirikovand Soria (2020) stated that students could not receive economic support, Iancheva et al (2020) mentioned that far from receiving public support, international students even faced with harassment.

Another field that international students affected during the pandemic is communication. These students were mostly in contact with Turkish and other international students but they experienced some challenges in the new period. A majority of the students commented that their communication was restricted, they used online communication tools, communicated through social media, could not meet with new people, had communication difficulties with Turkish people and they mostly contacted other international students. Moreover, there were also some students who did not experience any changes in communication. According to the experiences of international students, it can be argued that they had communication problems with the restriction of face-to-face interaction and situations that require communication have been minimized.A study carried out by Jang et al. (2021)revealed that students follow social distancing rules and therefore, their interaction decreased. Li et al.(2020) stated thatthe poor Chinese language proficiency of international students in China caused students to have communication problems. On the other hand, Seale et al. (2012)found that social isolationadversely affected students' communicationto a large extent.

The travel restrictions implemented to stop the spread of the coronavirus have negatively affected the domestic and international transportation of international students. The measures are loosened or increased according to the number of coronavirus cases. The most implemented travel restriction is to limit intercity travel. So, international students had difficulty getting in touch with their friends in other cities. During this period, some students could not return to their home country as well as some could not come to Turkey from their home country. International students could not leave their homes and faced some difficulties in urban transportation also. However, some students did not follow the lockdowns and continued traveling. Chirikovand Soria (2020) highlighted that international students are most concerned about travel restrictions.

It was determined that the international students were influenced psychologically by the new period with restrictions. Since these students experienced the pandemic in a foreign country, away from their families, and in a restricted environment, they were more affected compared to local students. While explaining their psychological condition,international students mentioned that they experienced fear of being infected with the coronavirus, were exhausted psychologically, felt bored because of staying at home, felt lonely, were cautious for coronavirus

infection, and experienced anxiety, stress, sadness, and sleep disorder. Fewer students stated that they were not psychologically influenced by this pandemic, felt safe, and experiencedthe motivating effect of staying at home. Yakut İpekoğlu(2021) found that students tried to relax by watching movies/series during the pandemic. However, other studies have shown that students had experienced constant anxiety (Öz Ceviz et al., 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2020), they had experienced depression and they were constantly angry (Iancheva et al., 2020), they had experienced disappointment and sadness (Murphy, 2020), they were unhappy and stressed (Rith & Piantanakulchai, 2020).

Regarding education, which is the reason for international students' presence in Turkey, distance education methods have been implemented. Students have faced some challenges as they had to adopt a new education system. Among thesechallenges, the most important one was technical problems. And international students also mentioned some other difficulties such as limited communication in distance education, insufficient Turkish language proficiency, learning became more difficult, their motivation for learning decreased, class management became more difficult and applied courses were ineffective. In addition to the above-mentioned negative experiences, international students also had some positive experiences such as academic support from their friends, advantages of listening to the lectures again, and convenience provided by the faculty members. The rapidand sudden transition to distance learning caused some difficulties. As these students are foreigners, they need interaction more than local students and they are disadvantaged for understanding lectures. Nevertheless, they received valuable support from their friends and lecturers. Nurfaidahet al. (2020) found that international students who received support from administrators and lecturers were more successful. Furthermore, some reports indicated that students have adapted to distance education and they enjoyed it (Chirikov & Soria, 2020). However, many studies determined that international students could not benefit from distance education sufficiently due to some factors. Research has shown that the factors related to ineffective learning in distance education include infrastructure problems and limited interaction (Fansury et al., 2020; Güngör et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020; Nurfaidah et al., 2020), losses in learning (Saavedra, 2020), inequality in access to education (Fansury et al., 2020). Puspitasariet al. (2020) pointed out that students prefer and want face-to-face education more.

Considering the international students' expectations regarding the post-pandemic period including returning to normal life will take time, limited socializing will continue to persist, and distance education will continue, it can be argued that students were not very hopeful about the future. Although a limited number of students believed that normalization will be fast, the international students' common idea is that it will take a long time. Besides, some students stated that the role of the internet in everyday life will continue to increaseas its impact has increased considerably during this period.

Conclusion

The examination of views of international students in Turkey regarding the pandemic showed that they had some experiences in various areas such as social life, communication with acquaintances, psychological condition, education, and travel. Students experienced many changes while trying to adapt to the new period. International students were estranged from people socially, had communication problems, and faced with travel restrictions as well as philologically exhausted. These students faced comparably more difficulties during the pandemic since they are far away from their home country, have limited relationships, and cope with adapting to a new culture. These students left their home country to receive education however, they were most affected by educational practices. Education in universities has been carried out through distance education methods for a long time and students are away from campusphysically. The unique features of the distance education system, in which millions of students are compulsory enrolled, make it difficult to adapt quickly. Problems, especially internet infrastructure and technical disruptions highly affected the students. Although serious measures were implemented to prevent students from being adversely affected by this situation, inevitably,

students faced some problems. According to the students' opinions regarding expectations from the future, they believedthat although the pandemic will end one day, its impact will persist for a long time.

International students in many countries around the word must have had similar challenges in the host countries due to the pandemic. Identifying the experiences of international students in these countries would contribute to determining the correct measures and policies for these students. The findings obtained with such studies will help to understand the condition of international students in various countries and ensure planning better education programs for the future.

Recommendations

Based on the results obtained, the following recommendations can be made:

- Public institutions should implement some measures for the social problems that international students experienced.
- Some precautions should be considered for meeting the needs of the home-quarantined students.
- Distance education should be improved to be more beneficial to students.
- Convenient options should be offered to international students for returning to their home country.
- Psychological support should be provided to international students who are away from their home country and dealing with loneliness.
- Universities should establish and maintain strong communications with international students.
- The experiences of international students from different countries about the pandemic should be examined and worldwide information on the condition of these students should be combined.

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