

# Analysis of the academic educational and social problems facing international students at Karabük University

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the problems faced by international students in the science and engineering departments at Karabük University, Turkey, with a focus on academic and social issues. A semi-structured interview model was used as the primary tool within a field survey research design. The participants included 152 international students, and their academic and social challenges were analyzed using questionnaires that examined several variables, such as the relationship between gender and mathematics grades and the effect of Turkish language proficiency on course evaluation. Statistical analyses were conducted in SPSS, including the chi-square test and Cramer's V correlation coefficient, to assess the presence and strength of relationships among variables. The results indicated that the relationships between gender and mathematics grades, employment status and perceived exam difficulty, Turkish language proficiency and language course evaluation, and scholarships and the choice of Karabük University were weak to moderate, suggesting no strong association among these variables. Therefore, the findings suggest that these variables do not have a significant impact on the academic and social issues international students experience.

**Keywords:** *Academic analysis, Educational issues, International students, Social analysis*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The cross-border higher education landscape offers students a wide range of options for accessing education outside their home countries. In some cases, cross-border education is arranged directly between the student and an overseas educational institution, while in other cases, access to overseas education is achieved through an agreement between a local educational institution and another institution in the host country [1]. Integration is considered a fundamental element of students' well-being in higher education; however, integrating new students from diverse cultural backgrounds can pose challenges. To ensure that students engage with their new environment, the referenced study employed mixed-methods data collection, analyzing weekly journal entries from local and international students at the beginning

of an engineering program and conducting follow-up interviews. The journal entries focused on how students adapted to the program from academic, social, and professional perspectives. The results indicate that students exhibited minimal negative interaction with their academic experience, while their professional experience was highly positive [2].

Today, many students pursue educational experiences abroad, and empirical data indicate that international students generally show a high level of openness, highlighting their successful integration into Turkish society [3]. The main issues foreign students face at Karabük University, particularly in the Faculty of Science and Engineering, include language and academic challenges. This work focuses on these areas and also highlights additional problems related to equipment,

materials, educational resources, and laboratories. The primary goal of the research is to identify the challenges foreign students experience in language, communication, teaching methods, education, and examinations. The main issues foreign students face at Karabük University, particularly in the Faculty of Science and Engineering, include language and academic challenges. The work is also highlighting additional problems related to equipment, materials, educational resources, and laboratories. The primary goal of the research is to identify the challenges foreign students experience in language, communication, teaching methods, education, and examinations. In this context, the academic and social challenges faced by international students from Africa have been identified, and a set of solutions has been proposed to enhance their academic success and social experience in universities. This helps improve the academic community's understanding of their needs [4].

A study was conducted on 141 international students from the University of Mississippi and the University of Alabama to examine the impact of social support and cultural integration on academic adjustment. The results showed a strong positive correlation between social support and academic adjustment, with the majority of participants being graduate students and an average age of 29.4 years [5]. Academic affiliation has a greater impact on academic performance, while both types of affiliation affect psychological aspects, with academic affiliation having a stronger impact [6]. Another study examined the experiences of international students in academic, social, and cultural environments, highlighting challenges related to communication with professors and peers, as well as social isolation during group activities. It also emphasizes the need to confront cultural differences in thinking and behavior in the United States. To overcome these challenges, universities should be prepared to meet students' needs not only academically but also socially and culturally, necessitating effective preparations for their reception upon arrival [7]. Despite the numerous benefits of studying abroad, students face various challenges upon arrival in their host country. Educational challenges are at the forefront of these difficulties, including language barriers and differences in educational systems, curricula, and teaching methods [8,9].

The main research questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section includes 11 demographic questions related to gender and age. The second section contains 30 questions addressing academic issues faced by international students, including academic performance,

the admissions process, reasons for choosing Turkey and Karabük University, educational requirements, and related challenges. Various social characteristics and problems have been selected to assess the compatibility and strength of correlation among academic, educational, and social issues, with the aim of understanding their interrelationships. Therefore, the aim of the research is to analyze the academic, educational, and social problems of international students at Karabük University using statistical tests. For this purpose, frequently used chi-square tests are discussed, and the hypotheses regarding the relationship between the problems and the variables are examined.

In this study, comparisons were made among the chi-square tests of goodness of fit, homogeneity, and independence. In this regard, the current research problem was presented, where the relationships in each were discussed and examined: identifying the comparative relationship between gender and the students' math scores among international students participating in the research; identifying the comparative relationship between the employment status of international students and their assessment of the difficulty level of exams at Karabük University; identifying the comparative relationship between the level of the Turkish language and the evaluation of the Turkish language courses (TOMAR) at Karabük University; and identifying the comparative relationship between the scholarships provided to international students as a characteristic of social issues and the choice of Karabük University for continuing their education. The importance of this research lies in understanding the correlation and compatibility between the academic, educational, and social variables to clarify the impact of these issues on international students. The research seeks to address and mitigate these problems, creating a comfortable and suitable educational environment that contributes to the advancement of Karabük University. Additionally, similar issues can be addressed within the main research, along with examining the impact of this correlation on students' lives during their university studies.

### 1.1 Related work

Foreign students, particularly Asian students, often face greater challenges than local students in both social and academic settings. A study involving 105 Asian students and 217 Australian students found that Asian students experienced more difficulties with personal relationships and interactions across diverse backgrounds.

Rural Australian students reported some difficulties, but to a lesser extent, whereas Asian students relied more on information-seeking strategies. In another study, 101 Australian students and 101 ethnic Chinese students reported that Chinese students struggled with private tutoring, felt uncertain about how to behave, and lacked confidence in their English skills [10].

A mixed-methods study investigated the role of social communication in the academic adaptation of international postgraduate students in the United Kingdom. A survey (N = 101) assessed communication levels with citizens, host country nationals, and other international students, and identified a positive relationship between communication with other international students and academic performance. Semi-structured interviews (N = 17) provided deeper insights into communication patterns. The implications of these findings are discussed, along with suggestions for future research [11].

Based on longitudinal research at four Dutch universities, one study compared the academic performance of 146 Dutch students and 215 international students, focusing on educational and social integration. Using Hofstede's cultural model, students from 53 countries were grouped into 10 geographic regions. The results showed similar integration scores for Western European and domestic students. In contrast, Eastern European and non-European master's students, particularly those from South Asia and Asian Confucian cultures, demonstrated significantly lower levels of integration. Follow-up analyses indicated that academic adaptation was the primary predictor of study performance, regardless of cultural differences. A second study reported that half of the master's students experienced transition challenges [12].

A prior study using data from students at Düzce University who participated in the Erasmus program examined the impact of orientation training on students' academic, social, and personal development during international study. The results indicated that orientation programs play a critical role in supporting social integration, improving overall student satisfaction, and facilitating cultural adaptation and institutional familiarization. Although the orientation duration (two hours to one week) was generally considered adequate, some participants reported limited personal benefit, highlighting the need for a more needs-based, student-centered program design. This study emphasizes the importance of well-structured orientation programs in supporting students' transition to international academic environments and provides insights for institutions seeking to improve orientation

practices [13].

This study explores the challenges of academic and social adaptation faced by international students in Çorum. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 students. Key factors influencing university choice included affordability, English-language instruction, and early admissions. However, language barriers, cultural differences, financial strain, and bureaucracy hindered adaptation. Social exclusion and discrimination further complicated social integration. Support from family, peers, and university services was found to ease these difficulties. The study recommends improving language and cultural integration programs, increasing financial support, and simplifying administrative processes to enhance international students' adaptation [14].

Exploring the Influence of Social Backgrounds on English Language Learning: A Study of Tajik and Kyrgyz Students. This study examined how social background influences English language learning by comparing Tajik and Kyrgyz students at a language center. A qualitative approach was used, with interviews and surveys conducted with ten students. The study explored the influence of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family support on learners' proficiency and attitudes toward learning. The results showed a strong relationship between social background, learners' preferences, attitudes toward learning, and overall performance. Sociocultural differences also played an important role in shaping learners' experiences and learning styles. The study emphasizes the need for educators to consider these sociocultural factors when designing and implementing English language teaching strategies to better support diverse learners and meet their needs [15].

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To study the relationships among the characteristics of academic, educational, and social issues affecting international students, SPSS was used to examine whether variables are correlated using the chi-square test. When a correlation was observed, we assessed its strength using the statistical correlation coefficient.

The chi-square statistic is a nonparametric tool designed to analyze group differences when the dependent variable is measured at the nominal level. This statistic can be applied to different data distributions without requiring equal variances between study groups. Chi-square was used in both independent bivariate and multi-

group studies, providing valuable information about each group's performance. Results from the chi-square test should be followed by a power test, such as Cramer's V, to ensure the reliability of the findings. Advantages of the chi-square test include ease of calculation, rich informational output, and applicability in studies that do not meet parametric assumptions. However, it has limitations, such as the need for an adequate sample size, difficulties in analysis with many categories, and Cramer's V's tendency to yield relatively low correlation measures [16,17]. Most previous studies on international students rely on deficit models to explain the difficulties and challenges they face [18] or on models of difference to describe them.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were collected through questionnaires administered to these students to analyze the academic, educational, and social problems international students face at Karabuk University. The study examined several variables, including the relationship between gender and students' mathematics scores, and the relationship between employment status and the assessment of exam difficulty. The influence of Turkish language level as a social factor on the evaluation of Turkish language courses (TOMAR) offered at the university was also explored. Finally, the effect of scholarships for international students on their decision to pursue education at Karabuk University was examined. Statistical tables and chi-square tests were used to measure the relationships and their strength, using the chi-square test (Chi-Square) and the statistical correlation coefficient, Cramer's V, to determine the existence and strength of relationships, if any.

After obtaining the chi-square outputs for each variable, the chi-square results for each variable believed to have a relationship were presented in table form. As shown in the chi-square results tables, when a relationship between variables is identified, the strength of the association is measured using the statistical correlation coefficient. Cramer's V is a statistical coefficient used to measure the association between two or more categorical variables in frequency tables, whether the tables are small or large. The coefficient ranges from zero to one: the closer the result is to one, the stronger the relationship between the two variables; the closer it is to zero, the weaker the association. This rule was applied to the following relationships. Studying the relationship

between gender and students' mathematics scores among international students participating in the research.

Based on the chi-square statistical test for the social characteristic of international students (gender), the results were significant at the 0.05 level, with degrees of freedom (d.f.) = 1. Accordingly, the table value was 3.84, and the calculated chi-square value was 32.96. Based on these results, we accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a fitness or association, and we reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no relationship. To calculate the correlation coefficient (Cramer's V), the following formula was used:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{X^2}{n(k-1)}}$$

Where k indicates the number of variables, n refers to the sample size, and X<sup>2</sup> refers to the chi-square test value. Therefore, we calculated the correlation coefficient V for the variables in Table 1.

$$k - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{32.96}{152(1)}} = \sqrt{\frac{32.96}{152}}$$

$$V = \sqrt{0.216}$$

$$V \approx 0.465$$

**Table 1** Distribution of international students according to type A for gender

A	Males	Females	Total
Males	60	12	72
Females	30	50	80
Total	90	62	152

According to the chi-square statistical test for an academic or educational characteristic, the average mathematics scores of international students were analyzed at the 0.05 significance level with df = 16. Therefore, the tabular value was 26.30, and the chi-square value was 38.057. Since the calculated chi-square value is greater than the tabular value, we assume the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a fitness or association, and we reject Hypothesis Zero, which states that there is no relationship. To determine the strength of the correlation, the correlation coefficient was used. Therefore, to calculate the correlation coefficient for the variable in Table 2:

$$k - 1 = 5 - 1 = 4$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{38.057}{152(4)}} = \sqrt{\frac{38.057}{608}}$$

$$V = \sqrt{0.062}$$

$$V \approx 0.248$$

**Table 2** Distribution of international students according to the math rate

B	1.00 – 2.00	2.00 – 2.50	2.50 – 3.00	3.00 – 3.50	3.50 – 4.00	Total
1.00 – 2.00	8	8	7	3	3	29
2.00 – 2.50	10	3	7	15	3	38
2.50 – 3.00	13	4	2	5	1	25
3.00 – 3.50	3	4	9	9	1	26
3.50 – 4.00	6	5	4	9	10	34
Total	40	24	29	41	18	152

From the resulting correlation coefficient V, we observe that V for gender is 0.465, indicating a moderate relationship between the gender variable and the mathematics rate. In addition, the value of V for the mathematics rate is 0.248, indicating a weak relationship between the mathematics score variable and international students' gender. Therefore, we examine the relationship between international students' employment status and their evaluation of exam difficulty at Karabuk University.

**Table 3** Calculate the correlation between the two variables: Mean in mathematics distribution of students by gender

Correlation Coefficient	Morale Level	Table Value	d.f.	Ch-Square	Variables
0.465	0.05	3.84	1	32.96	Gender
0.248	0.05	26.30	16	38.057	Math Rate

Based on the chi-square test for the social characteristic of employment status among international students, the result was significant at the 0.05 level ( $\alpha$ ) with degrees of freedom (df) = 1. Therefore, the critical (table) value for the chi-square distribution was 3.84, and the calculated chi-square statistic was 23.507. According to these results, we rejected the null hypothesis (which states that there is no relationship between the variables) and accepted the alternative hypothesis (which suggests a statistically significant association or goodness-of-fit). Therefore, to determine the strength of the association, we calculated Cramer's V for the variables in Table 4 as follows:

$$k - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{23.507}{152(1)}} = \sqrt{\frac{23.507}{152}}$$

$$V = \sqrt{0.154}$$

$$V \approx 0.392$$

**Table 4** Distribution by employment (work) status for international students

A	Works	Not works	Total
Works	70	30	100
Not Works	15	37	52
Total	85	67	152

Based on the chi-square test evaluating the difficulty level of exams for international students, the results were significant at the 0.05 level ( ) with degrees of freedom (df) = 9. Therefore, the critical table value for the chi-square distribution is 16.92, and the calculated chi-square statistic was 24.766. According to the results, we rejected the null hypothesis, which states that there is no relationship between the variables, and accepted the alternative hypothesis, which suggests a statistically significant goodness of fit. Therefore, to calculate the correlation coefficient for the variable in Table 5 as:

$$k - 1 = 4 - 1 = 3$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{24.766}{152(3)}} = \sqrt{\frac{24.766}{456}}$$

$$V = \sqrt{0.054}$$

$$V \approx 0.232$$

**Table 5** Distribution according to the difficulty level of the Exams

B	Acceptable	Middle	Good	Very Good	Total
Acceptable	20	5	10	15	50
Middle	25	10	8	7	50
Good	10	20	5	5	40
Very Good	5	2	2	3	12
Total	60	37	23	30	152

From the resulting correlation coefficient V, we note that the reported value in Table 4 is 0.392. This indicates a moderate relationship between the employment status variable (work) for international students and their evaluation of exam difficulty. In comparison, Table 4 shows a

value of 0.232, indicating a weak relationship between exam difficulty and work among international students. Moreover, we examine the relationship between students' Turkish language proficiency as a characteristic of social problems and the evaluation of the Turkish language courses (TOMAR) offered to international students at Karabuk University.

**Table 6** Calculate the relationship between the two variables: Students' employment status and the level of difficulty of the Exams

Correlation Coefficient	Morale Level	Table Value	d.f.	Ch-Square	Variables
0.392	0.05	3.84	1	23.507	Employment
0.232	0.05	16.92	9	24.766	Difficulty Level of Exams

Based on the chi-square test for the social characteristic of Turkish language level among international students, the result was significant at the 0.05 level with  $df = 4$ . Therefore, the tabular value is 9.49, and the chi-square value is 10.68. According to the results, we assume the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a fitness or association, and we reject Hypothesis Zero, which states that there is no relationship. To calculate the correlation coefficient Cramer's V to determine the strength of the association for the variable in Table 7 as:

$$k - 1 = 3 - 1 = 2$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{10.68}{152(2)}} = \sqrt{\frac{10.68}{304}}$$

$$V = \sqrt{0.0351}$$

$$V \approx 0.187$$

**Table 7** Distribution by Turkish language level for international students

A	A1 - A2	B1 - B2	C1 - C2	Total
A1 - A2	12	19	20	51
B1 - B2	30	41	18	80
C1 - C2	5	7	0	12
Total	47	67	38	152

**Table 8** Distribution by Turkish language courses level evaluation (TOMAR) special for international students

B	Meets Ambition	Does not Meet Ambition	Relative Development	Total
Meets Ambition	10	20	15	45
Does not Meet Ambition	25	35	20	80
Relative Development	12	5	10	27
Total	47	60	45	152

Using the chi-square statistical test to evaluate the level of Turkish language courses (TOMAR) for international students, the result was significant at the 0.05 level with  $df = 4$ . Therefore, the table value was 9.49, and the chi-square value was 7.646. According to these results, we accept Hypothesis Zero, which states that there is no relationship or association between the variables, and we reject the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a relationship between the variables.

**Table 9** Calculate the relationship between the two variables: The students' Turkish language level and the evaluation level of the Turkish language courses

Correlation Coefficient	Morale Level	Table Value	d.f.	Ch-Square	Variables
0.187	0.05	9.49	4	10.68	Turkish Language Level
There is no Connection	0.05	9.49	4	7.646	Turkish Courses Level Evaluation

Based on the resulting correlation coefficient (V), Table 7 shows a value of 0.187, indicating a weak relationship between the variables. Specifically, this concerns international students' Turkish language proficiency relative to their Turkish language course level (TOMAR). As shown in Table 8, the correlation coefficient was not calculated because the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there is no relationship between these variables (TOMAR course level and international students' Turkish language level).

In addition, the study examines whether scholarships offered to international students, as a social support measure, are associated with their decision to attend Karabuk University to complete their education.

**Table 10** Distribution according to scholarships for international students

A	Get a Scholarship	I Don't Get a Grant	Total
Get a scholarship	30	22	52
I Don't Get a Grant	50	50	100
Total	80	72	152

Based on the chi-square test for the social attribute of scholarships for international students, using a significance level of 0.05 and  $df = 1$ , the table (critical) value is 3.84, and the calculated chi-square value is 0.812. According to these results, we accept the null hypothesis, which states that there is no goodness-of-fit or association, and we reject the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a relationship.

**Table 11** Distribution according to reason for choosing Karabuk University to complete their education

B	Quality of Education	For Cheap Tuition Fees	Recommendation	Total
Quality of Education	25	18	9	52
For Cheap Tuition Fees	40	25	5	70
Recommendation	10	10	10	30
Total	75	53	24	152

Based on the chi-square test for the social attribute of scholarships for international students, using a significance level of 0.05 and  $df = 4$ , the table (critical) value is 9.49, and the calculated chi-square value is 11.712. According to these results, we accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a goodness-of-fit or association, and we reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no relationship.

Therefore, to determine the strength of the association for the variable in Table 11, the Cramer’s V correlation coefficient is calculated as follows:

$$k - 1 = 3 - 1 = 2$$

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{11.712}{152(2)}} = \sqrt{\frac{11.712}{304}}$$

$$V = \sqrt{0.0385}$$

$$V \approx 0.1962$$

**Table 12** Calculate the relationship between the two variables: Scholarships for international students and the reason for choosing Karabuk University to complete their education.

Correlation Coefficient	Morale Level	Table Value	d.f	Ch-Square	Variables
There is no Connection	0.05	3.84	1	0.812	According to Scholarships
0.1962	0.05	9.49	4	11.712	Karabuk University to Complete Their Education

To calculate the correlation coefficient V in Table 10, based on Nang’s chi-square, the null hypothesis was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a relationship, was rejected. For this reason, the correlation coefficient cannot be measured; therefore, it cannot be derived for the scholarships attribute compared with the reason for choosing Karabuk University to complete their education.

From Table 11, the value is 0.1962, indicating a weak relationship between choosing Karabuk University to complete their education and the scholarship ratio for international students.

## 4 CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationships among several factors affecting international students at Karabük University. Although moderate correlations appeared between gender and mathematics scores and between employment status and exam difficulty assessment, further analysis indicated that the actual relationships were weak. Specifically, the association between mathematics scores and gender was minimal, and the relationship between employment status and the assessment of exam difficulty was also weak. In addition, the analysis of Turkish language proficiency and course evaluation showed a weak relationship, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis that no significant correlation exists. Finally, the study examined the role of scholarships in choosing Karabük University and concluded that there was no strong correlation, as supported by the acceptance of the null hypothesis. Overall, these findings indicate that even where moderate correlations were observed, they did not reflect significant relationships among the variables studied.

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### Conflict of interest

No potential conflicts of interest exist for any of the authors.

### Consent to publish

N/A

### Ethical approval

N/A

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