



Journal of International Students
Volume 16, Issue 8 (2026), pp. 67-104
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)
jistudents.org
<https://doi.org/10.32674/kf1k1896>



Fundamental Challenges Encountered by International Graduate Students: Action Research to Enhance the Well-being of Turkish Scholars Abroad

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ABSTRACT: *Adopting a mixed-methods approach within the participatory action research framework, this study aims to identify the challenges faced by Turkish graduate students studying abroad under state scholarships. The interviews were conducted with six former scholars and four experts from the Turkish Ministry of Education to ensure that the participants' voices directly informed the research process. Insights from these interviews guided the development of an online survey. The results highlighted psychosocial stressors, communication issues, and gaps in institutional support. Action items were disseminated to policymakers to inform practice changes. The findings led to policy recommendations, with the Ministry subsequently establishing a "Psychological Counseling and Guidance Unit" to provide online counseling to students abroad. This study exemplifies how action research can drive evidence-based policymaking for international students.*

Keywords: International education, state scholarship, participatory action research, Turkish graduate students abroad, well-being, student support services

Received: 30, June 2025 | **Revised:** 9, Dec 2025 | **Accepted:** 18, Jan 2026

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Academic Editor: Dr. Doris Zhang, University of Tokyo, Japan

Academic Committee: Dr. Yujin Yaguchi | Dr. Yuki Ohara | Dr. Kimberly A. Noels | Dr. Rui Zhang

How to Cite (APA): Cobanoglu, A., Cavdar, D., Tutar, P., & Avci, D. (2026). Fundamental challenges encountered by international graduate students: Action research to enhance the well-being of Turkish scholars abroad. *Journal of International Students*, 16(8), 67-104. <https://doi.org/10.32674/kf1k1896>

INTRODUCTION

International education is critical for fostering global collaboration, cultural exchange, and the development of human potential for countries. However, international students often face several challenges, including cultural adjustment, academic pressures, and the ability to navigate complex bureaucratic systems (Click, 2018; Huang, 2012; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Rodríguez et al., 2019). Considering these challenges, targeted institutional support systems to ensure equitable and successful outcomes for students across diverse backgrounds would help international students (Amirali & Bakken, 2015). On the other hand, important factors include creating inclusive learning environments, establishing supportive relationships, and providing on- and off-campus support systems to promote the academic development and well-being of international students (Woloshyn et al., 2019).

The experiences of international students within personal, familial, institutional, and national contexts can be explained within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach. The ecological model consists of four nested systems influencing individuals' behavior: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem, which comprises immediate settings such as the university, family, and peer groups, has the most direct influence on student development. Extending from this, the mesosystem encompasses the complex interactions between these primary structures, such as the relationship between a student's home life and their academic environment. The exosystem encompasses the formal and informal social structures surrounding the individual. The macrosystem encompasses the cultural structure and laws of society (Muuss, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1979) points to the school system and school life within the microsystem as important structures with which the student interacts directly. In other words, for a student

who has migrated to a different country, the university is part of the student's microsystem and is important as an environment with which they interact directly. On the other hand, students who are confronted with a foreign language, education in a new environment, finances, accommodations and daily life problems experience changes in all their systems and have to cope with a series of institutional rules they are not accustomed to (Sawir et al., 2008). International education is understood as “adaptation” to the norms and institutions of the host country, but failure to adapt can also be considered a deficiency on the part of the student (Marginson, 2014). International students enter a process of self-formation in which they shape their own identities under social conditions beyond their control (Marginson, 2014).

The Ministry of Education¹ in Turkey administers the State Scholarship Program (YLSY), which exemplifies a structured effort to address the country's human capital needs. Established under Law No. 1416, this official scholarship program has supported Turkish students in pursuing graduate and postgraduate studies abroad since the early 20th century (Law About the Students to Send to Foreign Countries, 1929). The primary objective of the YLSY Scholarship is to cultivate highly qualified individuals who, upon completing their education, will contribute to Turkish universities, state offices, and other governmental agencies. By investing in human potential, the program aligns with Turkey's broader development goals.

This study explores the experiences of Turkish graduate students supported by the YLSY Scholarship, with the aim of identifying barriers and proposing actionable solutions to enhance support mechanisms. Understanding and proactively addressing the current challenges confronting the YLSY Scholarship program, specifically considering the direct experiences of former recipients and current staff, is critical for both maximum efficacy and equitable outcomes for all scholars. By integrating insights from different stakeholders, this research situates the experiences of YLSY scholars within the broader context of global student mobility, equity, and sustainable development in higher education.

Studies addressing the difficulties experienced by international students indicate that students from different countries and cultures encounter similar challenges (Amirali & Bakken, 2015; Ankomah, 2022; Lee, 2010; Byrne et al., 2019; Gebru & Yuksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2020; Poyrazli et al., 2001; Sung, 2022; Woloshyn, et al., 2019). International students experience various difficulties, including academic challenges and uncertainties (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2019; Lee & Ciftci, 2014; Sudhakaran et al., 2024), language issues (Singh et al., 2015), racism and xenophobia (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007), loneliness and homesickness (Click, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2019), and difficulty communicating with other students (Rodriguez et al., 2019). These problems occur in different

¹ The term has been used interchangeably with other expressions, including the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Turkish Ministry of Education, to refer to the same governmental body.

areas and dimensions, causing international students to experience academic adjustment difficulties and mental health issues. This underscores the importance of students utilizing psychological support resources (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019).

The experiences of international students in higher education are shaped by four interrelated contexts: personal, familial, institutional, and national. The national context, encompassing the host country's language, education system, and sociocultural norms, plays a critical role in the adaptation process of international students (Sudhakaran et al., 2024). Institutional support and resources, family background, and individual characteristics also significantly impact the adaptation process (Jones, 2017). Therefore, the support provided by host countries, governments, and universities is highly important (Oduwaye et al., 2023; Woloshyn et al., 2019). However, host countries or universities are often not equipped or have limited resources to provide culturally relevant support systems and services.

This study is expected to contribute to the literature by identifying the challenges faced by students and highlighting concrete steps taken to mitigate these challenges. Although thousands of Turkish students have pursued higher education abroad for decades, only a limited number of studies have examined their adjustment experiences, although such research has increased in recent years. For example, Oz Cetindere and Shin (2025) explored how Turkish students in the United States coped with academic and social challenges through peer support and information sharing. Similarly, Erturk, Oker, and Nguyen Luu (2021) investigated the adaptation of Turkish students at German universities and identified key themes such as perceptions of the host country, adjustment challenges, and attitudes toward counseling. In a similar vein, Tutar (2023) focused on Turkish graduate students in the United States and highlighted language-related barriers that hindered their academic success. Sena and Iyad (2022) examined the psychological, sociocultural and academic difficulties experienced by Turkish students in Malaysia, as well as the link between language proficiency and academic achievement. Likewise, Burkholder (2014) adopted a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of full-time, single Turkish graduate students as international students. While these studies have provided valuable insights, the experiences and support needs of international Turkish students remain largely unexplored, emphasizing the urgent need for more empirical research in this area. This study aims to investigate the challenges and needs faced by Turkish international students during their scholarship years, leveraging the authors' lived experiences and direct connections to the student community. By implementing participatory action research (PAR), this study seeks to address existing gaps in the literature and develop practical solutions to the identified issues, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities these students encounter while studying abroad.

LITERATURE REVIEW

International Graduate Student Needs and Challenges

Internationally, higher education institutions have reported an increase in the number and severity of mental health issues. University students exhibit higher levels of distress and mental health symptoms than their nonuniversity peers and the general population do (Kurtovic, 2018). These mental health problems negatively affect students' ability to participate in academic endeavors and activities (Kurtovic, 2018). For this reason, higher education institutions are placing greater emphasis on students' mental well-being in addition to academic achievement (Gagnon, 2020).

This study examines the problems experienced by graduate students studying in different countries with a Turkish state scholarship under two main themes: "Psychosocial and Sociocultural Challenges" and "Academic and Bureaucratic Challenges". Previous studies, such as the review conducted by Kaur Mehar Singh and Xue (2025), have shown that most research on international students' adjustment tends to classify challenges into two main categories: academic and sociocultural. On the other hand, as highlighted in the systematic review and meta-analysis by Tan et al. (2025), psychological difficulties remain among the most prominent challenges faced by international students. In the present study, bureaucratic challenges are added to this framework, encompassing difficulties related to visas, residence permits, communication with scholarship agencies, and official correspondence with universities. Particularly for Turkish students, in recent years, the increasing difficulty of obtaining student visas in some European countries has highlighted the need to include such bureaucratic barriers as a significant dimension of international students' adaptation processes.

Psychosocial and sociocultural challenges

International students frequently face mental health challenges, including loneliness, homesickness, burnout, stress, anxiety, and depression, while adapting to different cultural environments (Gagnon, 2020; Lu, 1990; Rosenthal et al., 2006; Russell et al., 2010; Shah et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2015; Yi et al., 2003). A study by Sudhakaran et al. (2024) revealed that anxiety was prevalent among international graduate students and that academic, cultural, and language barriers contributed to anxiety as a mental health issue. Similarly, a systematic review by Oduwaye et al. (2023) emphasized that mood disorders, low motivation, and other clinical psychiatric disorders may also occur. If necessary support is not provided, these issues may lead to more serious psychological problems, such as major depression.

Adapting to a new environment with different cultural values is one of the most fundamental challenges faced by international students (Poedjiastutie, 2015). Being far from their families and social support networks can test students' emotional resilience (Shah et al., 2019). Language barriers often underlie social adaptation issues. Even when studying in English-speaking countries, students

whose native language is not English may experience communication difficulties and require support (Kuo, 2011; Mahmoud et al., 2020).

These students demonstrate deficiencies in speaking and listening skills, according to Amiralı and Bakken (2015), Sawir (2005), and Singh and Kaur (2016). A study by Oduwaye et al. (2023) identified the most frequently reported problems of international students as culture shock, language inadequacy, difficulty adapting to the culture, differences in social values and moral norms, discrimination, accommodation problems, homesickness, loneliness, uncertainty about immigration policies, and general adaptation problems. According to Brown & Jones (2013) and Dovchin (2020), challenges related to social adaptation typically take the form of communication barriers, an inability to interact with the local population, discrimination, or feelings of exclusion.

International students often experience culture shock when adapting to their new environment. They encounter difficulties with everyday life practices, such as finding accommodations, managing financial transactions, and planning transportation (Wu et al., 2015). Cultural shock can lead to social isolation, an inability to participate in social activities, and difficulty in forming friendships (Russell et al., 2010; Elturki et al., 2019). These issues can undermine students' sense of belonging and negatively impact their life satisfaction. According to Lee and Ciftci (2014), when a person's personality does not fit into a new environment, a cultural distance emerges. This situation also affects one's sense of belonging. In collectivist cultures, for example, conformity to group norms is seen as a desirable trait, and group identity contributes to improved psychological health and well-being. A strong relationship exists between psychological and sociocultural adjustment. The social bonds students form with their families, the local community, and other international students play a decisive role in their overall well-being and academic success (Sheng et al., 2022). Difficulties in the cultural adaptation process can negatively affect students' daily functioning and academic achievement (Eliot et al., 2016).

In summary, international students consistently encounter complex mental health and adaptation challenges, ranging from prevalent issues such as loneliness, homesickness, anxiety, and depression to significant sociocultural struggles such as language barriers, culture shock, discrimination, and difficulties forming social connections. The absence of familiar support networks often intensifies these problems and can profoundly impact their emotional resilience, daily functioning, well-being, and eventually academic success.

Academic and bureaucratic challenges

Another significant issue for international students is adapting to the academic system and bureaucratic processes. These students struggle with differences in the structure of the education system, teaching methods, academic expectations, and evaluation criteria (Alavi & Mansor, 2011). Prominent academic challenges identified in the literature include English language proficiency, procrastination, adapting to a new academic environment, faculty–student relationships, advisor roles, and high levels of academic stress (Oduwaye et al., 2023). Terui's (2011) study revealed that international students have

difficulty communicating with faculty members because of their limited language proficiency. Sometimes, they pretend to understand what is being said, which can lead faculty members to perceive them as unprepared. Language proficiency deficiency is one of the fundamental obstacles that students encounter, particularly in understanding and producing academic texts (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). Gupta et al. (2022), for example, state that academic writing is a fundamental element of a successful postgraduate program, especially at the doctoral level. They also noted that while postgraduate students are expected to write scientifically for their theses and publications, international students often receive little to no training in academic writing.

Additionally, accent-related issues can hinder students' ability to comprehend others and communicate effectively, often resulting in their exclusion from academic discussions (Burdett & Crossman, 2012; Sherry et al., 2010; Vazquez Diaz & Iqbal, 2024). Students from non-English-speaking countries feel intense pressure to quickly learn a new language and use it at an academic level (Oduwaye et al., 2023). In addition to these academic challenges, uncertainties related to bureaucratic procedures, such as visa renewal, residence permits, and health insurance, cause anxiety and make it difficult for students to focus on their studies (Ankomah, 2022; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). In recent years, bureaucratic obstacles such as visa delays have increasingly affected students' access to international education. For example, as reported by *Turkiye Today* (2024), many Turkish students have either faced significant delays in beginning their studies or have been unable to commence their programs at all owing to prolonged and stressful visa procedures, particularly in countries such as Italy. The cumulative effect of these challenges can sometimes lead students to drop out of school (Pineda et al., 2022).

In summary, engaging in academic work in a second language, managing relationships with advisors/supervisors and peers, adapting to a new education system, and navigating bureaucratic requirements can pose significant challenges for international students. These academic difficulties can, in turn, negatively impact their social and mental well-being. Therefore, it can be argued that international students often face greater challenges than their local peers do and may require additional support services.

Contextual Background: Challenges of Turkish Scholars Abroad

The YLSY Scholarship Program, implemented by the Directorate General for Higher Education and Study Abroad under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), is a long-standing initiative rooted in Law No. 1416 that has supported the international education of outstanding students for over a century (Law About the Students to Send to Foreign Countries, 1929). The program aims to increase Turkey's qualified human capital by enabling students to pursue graduate education abroad, with the expectation that they will return to serve in public universities or other government institutions.

Each year, a considerable number of students benefit from this opportunity. The majority of them pursue their studies in the United Kingdom, the United

States, Germany, and the Netherlands, whereas smaller cohorts are placed in countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, and other countries. Studying abroad offers students academic enrichment and valuable social and cultural experiences. However, international education also presents notable challenges. Recent research (Cobanoglu et al., 2025; Karakaş, 2020) has revealed that a significant number of Turkish scholarship students encounter psychological difficulties during their studies abroad. These difficulties, especially during the first year, often include loneliness, psychological distress, and a lack of social support. Students reported needing help with a broad range of issues, including not only academic workload and career planning but also emotional concerns and adapting to life in different cultural contexts.

Despite the scale of the YLSY program, there is a noticeable gap in the academic literature regarding the psychosocial experiences of these students. Only a handful of studies have investigated the challenges faced by YLSY scholars (Aktekin & Karatas, 2019; Aktekin & Tekben, 2019). Furthermore, there is currently no systematic support framework in place to address the psychological and emotional well-being of these students while they are abroad. This lack of structured psychosocial support is particularly striking given the findings of international literature, which consistently highlight the common challenges faced by students studying in foreign countries. Amiralı and Bakken (2015) emphasize the importance of strategies such as attracting, admitting, and hiring high-quality international graduate students; meeting equity and diversity goals without compromising quality; and utilizing resources such as language barriers, cultural and geographic barriers, and social media (Amiralı & Bakken, 2015).

Given these findings, there is an urgent need for both empirical research and practical interventions. Addressing the psychological needs of YLSY students is critical not only for safeguarding their well-being and academic success but also for ensuring the effective use of public resources invested in their education. This study aims to help fill this gap by contributing evidence-based policy changes and is expected to inform the design of more supportive, responsive, and sustainable policies for Turkish students studying abroad under Law No. 1416.

METHOD

This research adopts a mixed-methods strategy rooted in participatory action research (PAR) to investigate the difficulties faced by Turkish graduate students studying abroad who receive financial support from the YLSY Scholarship. The approach aims to gather qualitative and quantitative data on the participants' experiences, offering practical recommendations to enhance support systems (Cornish et al., 2023).

Owing to mental health stigma and a lack of understanding/knowledge in the government sphere of the experiences of students abroad, government applications or a lack of such applications have not been previously challenged or criticized to support students abroad. Accordingly, the mental health needs of Turkish graduate students studying abroad under this specific scholarship, who

often face a unique set of challenges, remain underexplored in the literature. Conventional positivist research often seeks universal truths in controlled settings, whereas PAR emphasizes research embedded in real-world settings, with the active involvement of participants, ensuring that findings remain meaningful and actionable within their unique context (Baum et al., 2006). As critical educational scientists, as stated by Kemmis (2006), and as part of the group researched in this paper, the first and second authors advocated for addressing some of the problems and challenges international students face today and aimed to take action to address these issues. Together, they conducted a reflective, iterative cycle of data collection, analysis, action, and further reflection.

Considering that two of the authors were directly impacted by issues such as students and that two of them are currently working with students from the 1416 scholarship, implementing PAR benefits lived experiences and insider knowledge in the investigation of challenges and needs. In the meantime, this research can be easily translated to the student community, with the overall objective of understanding and solving the complex problems that Turkish international students face during their scholarship years (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). Through collaborative inquiry, we first address a gap in the literature by examining the challenges and needs of students abroad. Then, we implement real-world solutions by taking action to address the identified challenges and issues.

Participants

Our population consisted of all Turkish graduate students currently studying abroad with support from the YLSY Scholarship (N = 2,500). A comprehensive survey was distributed via email to all eligible participants to maximize response rates and ensure inclusivity. A total of 370 students, comprising 59% males and 41% females, responded to the survey. With respect to education level, 87% were registered in PhD/doctoral programs, and 10% were studying for their master's degrees.

Data collection

First, focus group discussions were conducted to ensure that the voices of the participants directly informed the participants of the research process. These discussions included six alumni of the YLSY Scholarship Program, two of whom also acted as coresearchers in the study and four professionals who work closely with scholarship recipients. These sessions aimed to collaboratively identify key challenges and cocreate solutions. Detailed notes and transcripts were analyzed to generate initial themes.

The key themes and subthemes are as follows: (1) *Administrative difficulties* with the Turkish Ministry of Education, with subthemes including lack of communication, lack of support, long waiting times for paperwork, poor collaboration among different stakeholders, and insufficient guidance from domestic advisors in Turkey. (2) *Psychological challenges*, with subthemes of loneliness, high acculturative stress, achievement pressure, and limited

psychological support from the Ministry. (3) *Employment issues* with universities and institutions after graduation, with subthemes of negative attitudes (academic jealousy, mobbing), and a lack of prior communication and collaboration. These insights were used to inform both the survey design and actionable recommendations for policy improvements.

Afterwards, a structured survey instrument was developed on the basis of the themes and subthemes identified during the focus group discussions. The survey included demographic questions and sections addressing academic, psychosocial, and administrative challenges. The created items were sent to a government official who oversees the related division, and after three iterations of feedback, the final survey form was generated. The survey consisted of 30 items categorized into three themes: administrative challenges/Ministry of National Education (MoNE)-related issues (21 items), employment challenges (6 items), and psychosocial issues (3 items). The quantitative survey was distributed via email to the entire target population.

Data analysis

For the qualitative data, a five-phase thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013) was applied to the focus group data to identify recurring themes and subthemes. First, the qualitative data were repeatedly read to ensure familiarity, while potential points of interest were highlighted. Second, initial codes were generated on the basis of the research aims by using tables and figures. These codes were then grouped into broader, meaningful patterns to develop initial key themes and subthemes. Visual tools such as tables, figures and maps were also employed to organize the relationships between codes and themes. After the key themes were generated, each was reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the research aims. To establish a common understanding of the challenges faced by students, two alumni researchers conducted separate thematic analyses by following the same stages and comparing themes. Afterwards, some themes were revised, and the data were reread to identify any overlooked elements. Finally, the final themes and subthemes were clearly defined, named, and contextualized.

For survey data, descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages) were calculated to summarize survey data. Crosstabulations with chi-square tests are utilized to explore the differences in reported challenges on the basis of demographic variables (e.g., sex and level of study). The data were integrated into several points, such as focus group-informed survey questions.

RESULTS

Qualitative Findings: Insights from Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interview (with ministry specialists) data analysis identified three main themes and a range of subthemes (see Figure 1). They represent challenges with ministry officials (Theme 1), uncertainty around postgraduation placement (Theme 2), and the need for psychosocial support services (Theme 3).

<p>Theme 1: Challenges with Ministry Officials</p>	<p>Theme 2: Uncertainty Around Post-Graduation Placement</p>	<p>Theme 3: Need for Psychosocial Support Services</p>
<p>Subthemes:</p> <p>1. Communication issues: - Communication breakdown between Ministry officials and scholars - Insufficient communication skills of the Ministry staff - Lack of information and clarity about the scholarship process</p> <p>2. Bureaucratic issues and lack of staff - Heavy, long bureaucracy correspondence processes - Insufficient number of personnel in the ministry and overseas offices - Inadequate support from the Ministry of Officials because of their workload</p> <p>3. Need for Systemic Improvements -Lack of clear guidance and direction from the Ministry -Insufficient institutional support -Limited academic guidance -Need for a more student-centered approach</p>	<p>Subthemes:</p> <p>1. Challenges with Domestic Advisors -A lack of engagement -Unhelpful or negative attitudes -Frequent changes in advisors -Obstructive behaviors</p> <p>2. Uncertainty and Restrictions Related to Future Workplaces -Limited information about their postreturn placements -Restrictions on thesis topics -Difficulties obtaining approval for postdoctoral research</p> <p>3. Lack of Institutional Support from Future Workplaces</p>	<p>Subthemes:</p> <p>1. Academic support - Pressure of being successful because of their commitment to return to Turkey -Adaptation to the new educational system -Lack of a mentorship system -Peer support needed</p> <p>2. Emotional-social support - Scholars feel isolated and unsupported - Difficulty in cultural adaptation abroad - Need for psychological support in native language</p>

Figure 1: Themes and subthemes

The participants addressed a range of difficulties by considering their experiences with scholars. First, communication problems, including unclear or inconsistent information, limited guidance throughout the scholarship process, and poor communication skills among staff, have emerged as significant concerns. These issues often left students feeling confused or unsupported. Second, bureaucratic obstacles were frequently cited, with participants describing slow and complex administrative procedures, a shortage of staff both in Turkey and at overseas offices, and a general lack of timely or adequate support, often attributed to staff being overextended. Finally, they identified a broader need for systemic improvement, including the absence of clear guidance, academic or institutional support, and a lack of student-centered practices that address the unique needs of scholars navigating transnational education systems.

The participants highlighted several challenges related to scholars' future workplaces and domestic advisors. Many reported difficulties with advisors from the institutions they are expected to join upon returning to Turkey, including a lack of engagement, unhelpful or negative attitudes, frequent changes in assigned advisors, and even obstructive behaviors that hinder their academic progress. Uncertainty about future employment was another common concern, with scholars citing limited information about their postreturn placements, restrictions on thesis topics, and difficulties obtaining approval for postdoctoral research. Additionally, according to education specialists at the ministry, some scholars felt discouraged from returning to Turkey. Overall, there was a strong sense of insufficient institutional support from future workplaces during scholars' time abroad, marked by a lack of communication, academic guidance, and ongoing engagement throughout the scholarship period.

Moreover, the participants reported a strong need for both academic and emotional-social support among scholars during their studies abroad. Academically, many felt pressured to succeed because of their obligation to return and serve in Turkey, which contributed to heightened stress levels. They also faced difficulties adapting to unfamiliar educational systems and highlighted the lack of structured mentorship and peer support to help navigate academic expectations. The participants also recognized the emotional challenges scholars face, particularly loneliness during postgraduate education, and noted the Ministry's lack of institutional support in addressing these issues. Cultural adjustment was another common struggle, with acculturative stress further exacerbated by the absence of psychosocial support services in scholars' native languages. These findings highlight the need for holistic support structures that address both the academic and psychosocial aspects of Turkish students' international experience.

As a result, both the quantitative findings (from scholars) and the qualitative insights (from ministry specialists) consistently revealed that Turkish scholars studying abroad require ongoing and institutional support from the ministry. These results have contributed to a paradigm shift (more student-centered, inclusive and preventive) within the Turkish Ministry of Education, prompting concrete actions and policy changes that aim at improving the academic, cultural and social experiences of Turkish scholars abroad.

Quantitative Findings: Insights from the Survey

MoNE-Related Challenges and Concerns by Gender and Education Level

Chi-square analyses were conducted to examine gender and education level differences across MoNE-related challenges and concerns among YLSY scholarship recipients (N = 370). As shown in Table 1 (see Appendix), across the MoNE-related items, no statistically significant gender differences were observed except for the item regarding inconsistencies between information received from the ministry offices and consulate/advisory offices, $\chi^2(2) = 7.61, p = .022$. Specifically, 39.7% of the total sample reported not experiencing inconsistencies, whereas 31.6% reported that inconsistencies occurred, with females reporting slightly higher rates (35.9%) than males (28.6%). For all the other items, the gender distributions were similar ($p > .05$), with more than half of the participants reporting insufficient mentoring and guidance support (64.9%) and delays in scholarships and school payments (24.3%), regardless of gender.

With respect to education level, no significant differences were observed for MoNE-related concerns (all $p > .05$), except for the item regarding insufficient support for conferences and academic events, $\chi^2(2) = 13.361, p = .001$. A slight majority of the students perceive support for conferences and academic events as either insufficient or sometimes insufficient, and this varies by graduate level. Across the total sample, a majority reported challenges such as difficulties in keeping up with regulatory changes (63.5%) and insufficient support for conferences and academic events (66.2%).

Postgraduation Placement, Employment Processes, and Psychosocial Concerns by Gender

Most items related to postgraduate placement and employment processes did not show statistically significant gender differences. For example, perceptions regarding the appropriateness of advisor selections in Turkey did not differ significantly between male (28.1% “Yes”) and female participants (35.3% “Yes”), $\chi^2(2) = 3.91, p = .141$ (see Table 3 in the Appendix). Similarly, there were no significant gender differences in perceptions about receiving employment abroad aligned with participants’ qualifications, $\chi^2(2) = 2.72, p = .257$, or in perceptions regarding the sufficiency of foreign advisor support, $\chi^2(2) = 1.91, p = .384$. However, a significant gender difference was found regarding the perceptions of advisors in Turkey being sufficiently involved in the educational process, $\chi^2(2) = 10.33, p = .006$. Specifically, males were more likely to perceive sufficient advisor involvement (43.8%) than females were (28.1%), whereas females were more likely to report insufficient advisor involvement (52.9%) than males were (38.2%).

The results in Table 3 (see Appendix) demonstrate gender differences in psychosocial concerns. A significant difference was found ($\chi^2(2) = 12.58, p = .002$), with females reporting higher rates of experiencing anxiety about failing (56.2%) than males did (44.7%). Conversely, males were more likely to report not

experiencing anxiety about failing (27.6%) than females were (12.4%). Another significant difference was observed for the item related to coping with psychological problems, $\chi^2(2) = 11.76, p = .003$. Compared with males, females reported higher rates of being unable to cope with psychological problems (29.4%) (26.7%). Additionally, a greater proportion of females reported “sometimes” (47.7%) than males did (34.1%). No significant gender difference was found for anxiety related to delays in life tasks (e.g., marriage, starting work), $\chi^2(2) = 1.82, p = .403$, with a high proportion of both males (71.9%) and females (66%) reporting experiencing this anxiety during their years of schooling.

Postgraduation Placement, Employment Processes, and Psychosocial Concerns by Education Level

The chi-square analyses in Table 4 (see Appendix) examined whether perceptions related to advisor fit, institutional support, and future employment differed at the graduate level (doctoral vs. master’s/other). A significant difference in education level was found for perceptions of being informed about the positions and duties of the future institution, $\chi^2(2) = 10.39, p = .006$. Doctoral students reported lower rates of being informed (46.3%) than master’s/predoctoral students did (24.9%), indicating that doctoral students felt less adequately informed about their postgraduate placements when they completed their education abroad. In addition to the significant difference in terms of insufficient institutional information, perceptions of advisor suitability, advisor involvement, employment prospects, and confidence in YLSY appointments were consistent across graduate levels. A majority (71.6%) perceived their foreign advisors as knowledgeable and providing sufficient support.

Chi-square analyses revealed no statistically significant differences by education level across any of the psychosocial concern items ($p > .05$), indicating that doctoral and master’s/other students are similarly affected by these stressors during their scholarship processes. However, psychosocial concerns were notable, with a majority (69.5%) reporting experiencing anxiety due to delays in life tasks such as marriage, starting work, and income.

Action Research Integration

By integrating and reflecting on qualitative and quantitative findings, ministry officials collaborated to develop actionable recommendations for improvement (see action items in Figure 2). The quantitative data establish the scale of the problem (e.g., nearly 70% anxiety about life task delays), and qualitative data provide the context needed to design specific, meaningful interventions for the action cycles. At this stage, researchers act as a bridge between evidence and action. They supported the design of the action cycle in collaboration with policymakers to translate these research insights into institutional reform for graduate students.

Action Item 1: To improve support for admissions to high-quality doctoral programs, a guideline on “How to Apply to Graduate School in the USA” has been created, and regular online webinars on graduate school applications have

been held by experts who completed their studies abroad. While 72% expressed satisfaction with the support provided by their international advisors, only 39% believed that their overseas education and skills would align with future employment in Turkey.

To improve the connection between graduate studies and the scholarly work of students and their postgraduate placements, the MoNE initiated a new service, Student Support Advisors. Student support advisors provide essential preventive support to YLSY scholars. They proactively identify and address academic, administrative, and personal challenges, guiding scholars to the correct resources and tracking their progress. The goal of these services is to ensure that scholars have a healthier and more successful educational journey, both in Turkey and abroad. To date, the pilot program has commenced with 100 scholarship recipients to assess the effectiveness of student support services.

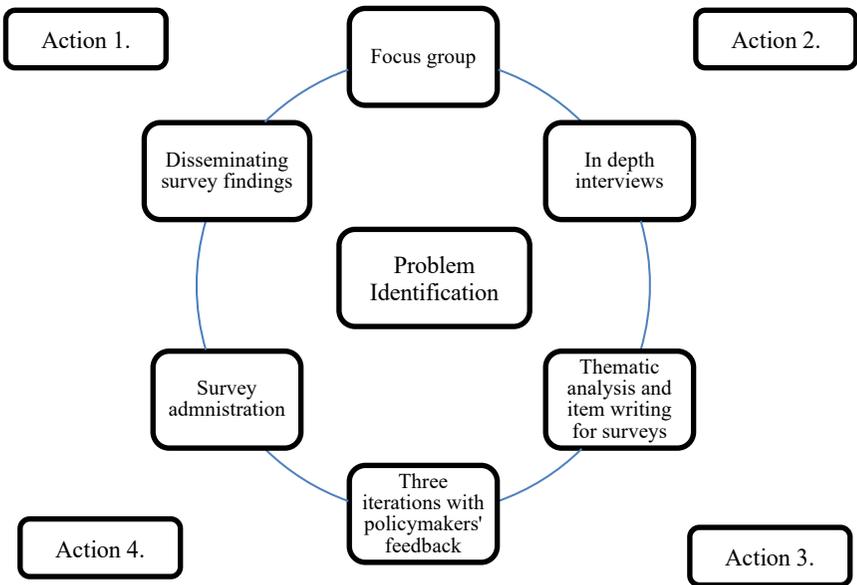


Figure 2: Full cycle of action research

Action Item 2: The ministry has started to collaborate with government agencies and institutes to organize orientations for students for the prospective students of the scholarship. Among the six items addressing employment-related issues, 59% of the respondents indicated that they were not adequately informed about their future institutions, roles, or responsibilities, and regardless of their gender, the students reported insufficient information about their future workplace. Additionally, doctoral students reported significantly lower rates

(46.3%) of being informed about the positions and duties of their future institution than did master's/predoctoral students (24.9%). Since students work as experts in government agencies and institutes or public universities as tenure track professors, the Ministry employees, who had been former recipients and returned to the country, attended several information seminars at universities and visited government agencies and institutes to bridge scholarship recipients with these agencies.

Action Item 3: The ministry has formed a “Psychological Counseling and Guidance Unit”, hired thirteen experienced psychological counsellors and started providing online counseling services to students in their native languages. Among the 3 items in this category, 70% of the participants reported anxiety related to delays in life milestones such as marriage, employment, or caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, 28% struggled with managing psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, and stress.

Proposed Actions

- Enhancing counseling services through training and quality improvement.
- Building an alumni tracking system for employment support.
- Developing an in-service education program for the ministry and providing staff.

To support the well-being of scholarship recipients currently studying abroad, a team of thirteen psychological counselors has been established within the Directorate General for Higher Education and Study Abroad under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). This team operates under the supervision of a faculty member from the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling at Hacettepe University. The initiative aims to promote students' well-being through online and free individual counseling services offered in their native language, with the goals of preventing academic failure due to psychological difficulties and facilitating their adaptation to the host country.

The working procedures of the YLSY-PDR (Psychological Counseling and Guidance) Unit have been defined through a protocol developed by the unit and the coordination team. The YLSY-PDR team attends weekly meetings and receives supervision one day a week at the Department of Student Support and Communication. On other days, psychological counselors work remotely from home and conduct up to five individual counseling sessions per day.

Communication with clients is maintained solely via email. Scholars in need of psychological support can request services either by completing the surveys sent every three months or by sending an email to the YLSY-PDR unit's official address. After submitting a request, they are placed on a waiting list. The psychological counseling team conducts sessions on the basis of the person-centered counseling approach developed by Carl Rogers (1980). This approach is considered safer than therapeutic models that position the therapist as an interpreter, diagnostician, unconscious explorer, dream analyst, or someone working toward fundamental personality changes (Corey, 2018). Counseling sessions are conducted via Microsoft Teams and typically last approximately 50 minutes. Counselors adjust to the time zones of the countries in which the

scholarship recipients are located. The number of sessions varies depending on the individual's needs and the course of the counseling process; on average, each client receives approximately 10 sessions.

A detailed protocol outlining the working procedures of the YLSY-PDR unit is in place, and an informed consent form is used before the sessions begin. All counseling processes are carried out in accordance with the principle of confidentiality. The information shared by clients is not disclosed to anyone. When receiving supervision, the identities of the scholarship recipients are kept confidential. However, in cases involving life-threatening situations such as suicidal ideation or legal obligations, the unit coordinator and the relevant embassy or education attaché must be contacted immediately by phone. Procedures to follow in crisis situations (e.g., natural disasters, war) are also defined in a separate crisis protocol.

In addition, studies (pre-post test mixed-methods design) are planned to evaluate both the effectiveness of the psychological counseling services provided to students and the impact of supervision and training on improving the professional competencies of the counseling team. These studies are expected to enhance the quality of services delivered within the Ministry and inform the development of more effective, evidence-based policies.

A team of thirteen psychological counselors, consisting of five men and eight women who graduated from psychology or counseling psychology programs and are employed by the Ministry of National Education, has been assigned to the relevant General Directorate. Their sole responsibility is to provide online psychological counseling services. To date (from July 2024 to November 2025), 652 scholarship recipients have received a total of 6,164 counseling sessions from this psychosocial support. A satisfaction survey is conducted every three months to measure the satisfaction of scholarship recipients with the service and counselors participating in the psychological counseling process. According to the results of the first survey, which was conducted in November 2024, 95% of scholarship recipients reported being highly satisfied with the services. The responses to the open-ended survey questions also provided positive feedback about counselors and unit operations. The "YLSY-PDR unit effectiveness study" was also included in the evaluation process. Scales applied before and after the counseling process assess the level of change and improvement in scholarship recipients' psychological well-being. Training sessions are also organized at specific intervals to support the professional and personal development of PDR unit counselors. Before the sessions began, the psychological counselors and supervisors received 50 hours of training in theoretical and practical topics, including the psychology of immigration, culturally sensitive psychological counseling, overseas adaptation processes and acculturation, homesickness, psychological resilience, group psychological counseling in online environments, intergroup prejudice and perceived discrimination, issues faced by married scholarship recipients, psychopathology, mainly depression, suicide prevention, crisis intervention and postvention. Counselors also receive supervision support from an experienced faculty member who conducts regular weekly psychological counseling supervision classes at the university, reviews client-centered practices,

and develops counseling skills. This ensures the reliability of the application process. Owing to the large number of counselors and clients, group supervision was preferred. As noted in the literature, group supervision enables work with multiple counselors in a short period and provides counselors with the opportunity to learn from each other's cases and experiences, as well as those of the supervisor (Corey et al., 2020). Owing to these advantages, group supervision is conducted once a week for a full day by a field expert in person.

The YLSY-PDR unit conducts regular satisfaction surveys every four months. These surveys are designed to measure the satisfaction of scholars who have participated in the psychological counseling process, both with the service and with their counselors. The survey results are used to evaluate counselors' performance and to improve the quality of services provided. This systematic approach allows counselors to receive feedback for their professional development while enabling continuous monitoring of the unit's efficiency. The surveys (November 2024 and March 2025) revealed high satisfaction rates (95%). The results provided positive feedback regarding both the counselor and the unit's overall operations on the basis of the responses to the open-ended questions and the overall satisfaction percentage.

Action Item 4: A preventive psychoeducation program has been developed to increase awareness of potential social and emotional risks among scholarship recipients before they travel abroad and to support their psychological resilience before they begin their studies. The program was developed during a one-week workshop with academics specializing in the preparation and implementation of psychoeducation, as well as ministry representatives and YLSY-PDR unit advisors. During the workshop, the program, consisting of eight sessions, was created with contributions from 40 experts. The program is planned to be completed in approximately one month for groups of eight to ten people and is currently undergoing a pilot application. After finalization, it will be published as a book to benefit all students studying abroad and shared with other institutions and organizations. Along with this study, an emergency guide has been prepared to provide scholarship recipients with guidance on the psychological support they may need during natural disasters or personal crises, such as the loss of a loved one or health problems, that could significantly affect their lives. The guide contains detailed steps for coping with intense stress during times of crisis and for increasing psychological resilience. An eight-person team consisting of expert academics, ministry representatives, and YLSY-PDR unit advisors prepared the guide following a one-week workshop. It has been printed and serves as an important resource for psychologists.

DISCUSSION

This study provides valuable insights for policymakers who design and implement support services for international students. It serves as a strong example of how action research can contribute to evidence-based policy making, particularly for Turkish postgraduate students studying abroad. The integration of empirical evidence into the policy development process highlights the study's

potential to inform more effective, responsive, and context-sensitive strategies aimed at enhancing the academic and social experiences of international students. As a result, important policy recommendations, including strategies to overcome systemic communication barriers and foster an environment of mentorship and active guidance and counseling to support international Turkish students' well-being and professional development, are offered.

The study challenges the assumption that demographic groups experience international scholarship processes uniformly. Across government-funded mobility programmes, beneficiaries' experiences of challenges and needs vary by gender and level of education. These differences matter because they reveal specific points in the system where certain groups are not receiving the support they need. The greater the degree of anxiety and coping difficulties reported by female scholars, the lower the sense of advisor involvement they experience, and the information gaps faced by doctoral students point to structural weaknesses that disproportionately affect particular subgroups. By drawing attention to how these system-level factors relate to psychological outcomes, this study offers a perspective that is often overlooked in research on government-funded international scholarship programs.

Implications

In response to the study's findings, strategic recommendations were shared with policymakers. As part of the PAR cycle's action phase (Kemmis, 2006), the Turkish Ministry of Education established a Psychological Counseling and Guidance Unit, appointed thirteen counselors, and launched online support services for Turkish students abroad, marking a concrete step toward more equitable and inclusive support for internationally mobile students. Importantly, the study highlights how institutional practices can better support equity for Turkish international students, particularly during their transition into foreign education systems. The students emphasized the need for student-centered services that included psychological support in their native language. Therefore, this study expands existing PAR theory to large-scale, bureaucratic contexts. The study broadens theoretical discussions about where and how PAR can function as a mechanism for organizational and policy change.

As a result, these actions have led to a paradigm shift within the Turkish Ministry of Education—toward more student-centered and preventive approaches—leading to new policies designed to enhance the academic, cultural, and social experiences of Turkish scholarship recipients abroad. This study makes a significant contribution to their well-being by employing action research methodologies and implementing targeted interventions, particularly through the enhancement of international student support services. Additionally, by linking statistically grounded subgroup analyses with a collaborative action design, the study contributes new knowledge on how iterative action cycles can be used to address both psychosocial and administrative inequities within international education systems.

Acknowledgment

AI was used to proofread English texts written by authors who used English as a second language. After receiving assistance from AI, the authors made the final revisions themselves.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Gender Differences across MoNE-related Challenges and Concerns with Counts, Percentages, and Chi-Square Tests

MoNE-related Items	Response	Male		Female		Total		Chi Square $\chi^2(2)$	p
		n	%	n	%	n	%		
I am receiving responses to my petitions after more than fifteen days.	No	96	44.2	61	39.9	157	42.4	1.80	0.406
	Sometimes	65	30	56	36.6	121	32.7		
	Yes	56	25.8	36	23.5	92	24.9		
No one is responding to my emails.	No	108	49.8	81	52.9	189	51.1	3.86	0.145
	Sometimes	95	43.8	55	35.9	150	40.5		
	Yes	14	6.5	17	11.1	31	8.4		
My emails are being answered after more than fifteen days.	No	116	53.5	75	49	191	51.6	2.32	0.314
	Sometimes	76	35	52	34	128	34.6		
	Yes	25	11.5	26	17	51	13.8		
I cannot reach the landline numbers at the ministry.	No	55	25.3	44	28.8	99	26.8	0.66	0.717
	Sometimes	96	44.2	67	43.8	163	44.1		
	Yes	66	30.4	42	27.5	108	29.2		
I can reach the ministry's landline numbers by calling repeatedly.	No	41	18.9	40	26.1	81	21.9	2.99	0.225
								(2)	

	Sometimes	79	36.4	54	35.3	133	35.9	
	Yes	97	44.7	59	38.6	156	42.2	
There is no appointment system for face-to-face meetings.	No	68	31.3	46	30.1	114	30.8	0.19 (2)
	Sometimes	24	11.1	19	12.4	43	11.6	
	Yes	125	57.6	88	57.5	213	57.6	
I find the communication skills of the Ministry staff I am in contact with to be inadequate.	No	107	49.3	74	48.4	181	48.9	0.39 (2)
	Sometimes	55	25.3	36	23.5	91	24.6	
	Yes	55	25.3	43	28.1	98	26.5	
I feel that the ministry staff's attitude toward scholarship recipients is not positive.	No	85	39.2	61	39.9	146	39.5	0.03 (2)
	Sometimes	55	25.3	39	25.5	94	25.4	
	Yes	77	35.5	53	34.6	130	35.1	
I am having difficulty keeping up with the processes related to regulatory changes.	No	34	15.7	22	14.4	56	15.1	2.59 (2)
	Sometimes	52	24	27	17.6	79	21.4	
	Yes	131	60.4	104	68	235	63.5	
The Ministry is not actively supporting me in obtaining admission to a master's/doctoral program.	No	76	35	43	28.1	119	32.2	2.59 (2)
	Sometimes	17	7.8	17	11.1	34	9.2	
	Yes	124	57.1	93	60.8	217	58.6	
The Ministry does not actively support scholarship recipients in terms of mentoring and guidance.	No	52	24.00	24	15.70	76	20.50	3.78 (2)
	Sometimes	30	13.80	24	15.70	54	14.60	
	Yes	135	62.20	105	68.60	240	64.90	

I am experiencing delays in scholarship and school payments.	No	108	49.80	87	56.90	195	52.70	2.69 (2)	0.26
	Sometimes	56	25.80	29	19.00	85	23.00		
	Yes	53	24.40	37	24.20	90	24.30		
I find the support for conferences and academic events insufficient.	No	46	21.20	30	19.60	76	20.50	0.16 (2)	0.921
	Sometimes	29	13.40	20	13.10	49	13.20		
	Yes	142	65.40	103	67.30	245	66.20		
I believe that the responsible personnel at the ministry lack sufficient information.	No	64	29.50	46	30.10	110	29.70	0.59 (2)	0.744
	Sometimes	53	24.40	42	27.50	95	25.70		
	Yes	100	46.10	65	42.50	165	44.60		
I am having difficulty finding the right person to address the issues I am experiencing at the Ministry.	No	63	29.00	44	28.80	107	28.90	0.52 (2)	0.771
	Sometimes	61	28.10	48	31.40	109	29.50		
	Yes	93	42.90	61	39.90	154	41.60		
I cannot log in to REBUS.	No	204	94.00	144	94.10	348	94.10	1.51 (2)	0.47
	Sometimes	13	6.00	8	5.20	21	5.70		
	Yes	0	0.00	1	0.70	1	0.30		
I find REBUS's functions inadequate.	No	131	60.40	88	57.50	219	59.20	0.42 (2)	0.811
	Sometimes	50	23.00	36	23.50	86	23.20		
	Yes	36	16.60	29	19.00	65	17.60		

I do not find REBUS user-friendly.	No	125	57.60	81	52.90	206	55.70	1.62 (2)	0.444
	Sometimes	50	23.00	34	22.20	84	22.70		
	Yes	42	19.40	38	24.80	80	21.60		
There are inconsistencies between the information I received from the Ministry and the Consulate/Advisory Offices.	No	99	45.60	48	31.40	147	39.70	7.61 (2)	.022*
	Sometimes	56	25.80	50	32.70	106	28.60		
	Yes	62	28.60	55	35.90	117	31.60		
I am unable to receive support from consulates/advisors during the process of adapting to local conditions in the country.	No	105	48.4	57	37.3	162	43.8	4.64 (2)	0.098
	Sometimes	28	12.9	26	17	54	14.6		
	Yes	84	38.7	70	45.8	154	41.6		
I am unable to receive adequate support from the attaché/advisory offices in case of an emergency.	No	124	57.10	76	49.70	200	54.10	2.44 (2)	0.296
	Sometimes	42	19.40	31	20.30	73	19.70		
	Yes	51	23.50	46	30.10	97	26.20		
The fact that attaché offices/advisory offices hold unscheduled meetings is causing problems.	No	113	52.10	74	48.40	187	50.50	1.89 (2)	0.389
	Sometimes	41	18.90	38	24.80	79	21.40		
	Yes	63	29.00	41	26.80	104	28.10		

note. N = 370

Asterisks indicate statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2: Education Level Differences across MoNE-related Challenges and Concerns with Counts, Percentages, and Chi-Square Tests

MoNE-related Items	Response		Doctoral Students		Master's/ Predocs		Total		Chi Square	p
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
I am receiving responses to my petitions after more than fifteen days.	No	13	31.7	144	43.8	157	42.4	4.03(2)	0.133	
	Sometimes	19	46.3	102	31	121	32.7			
No one is responding to my emails.	Yes	9	22	83	25.2	92	24.9	2.023	0.364	
	No	25	61	164	49.8	189	51.1			
My emails are being answered after more than fifteen days.	Sometimes	14	34.1	136	41.3	150	40.5	1.63	0.442	
	Yes	2	4.9	29	8.8	31	8.4			
I cannot reach the landline numbers at the ministry.	No	23	56.1	168	51.1	191	51.6	0.687	0.709	
	Sometimes	15	36.6	113	34.3	128	34.6			
I can reach the ministry's landline numbers by calling repeatedly.	Yes	3	7.3	48	14.6	51	13.8	2.099	0.35	
	No	13	31.7	86	26.1	99	26.8			
There is no appointment system for face-to-face meetings.	Sometimes	16	39	147	44.7	163	44.1	5.243	0.073	
	Yes	12	29.3	96	29.2	108	29.2			
	No	11	26.8	70	21.3	81	21.9	2.099	0.35	
	Sometimes	17	41.5	116	35.3	133	35.9			
	Yes	13	31.7	143	43.5	156	42.2	5.243	0.073	
	No	19	46.3	95	28.9	114	30.8			
	Sometimes	4	9.8	39	11.9	43	11.6	5.243	0.073	
	Yes	18	43.9	195	59.3	213	57.6			

I find the communication skills of the Ministry staff I am in contact with to be inadequate.	No	22	53.7	159	48.3	181	48.9	0.571(2)	0.752
	Sometimes	10	24.4	81	24.6	91	24.6		
	Yes	9	22	89	27.1	98	26.5		
I feel that the ministry staff's attitude toward scholarship recipients is not positive.	No	17	41.5	129	39.2	146	39.5	0.769(2)	0.681
	Sometimes	12	29.3	82	24.9	94	25.4		
	Yes	12	29.3	118	35.9	130	35.1		
I am having difficulty keeping up with the processes related to regulatory changes.	No	8	19.5	48	14.6	56	15.1	4.475(2)	0.107
	Sometimes	13	31.7	66	20.1	79	21.4		
	Yes	20	48.8	215	65.3	235	63.5		
The Ministry is not actively supporting me in obtaining admission to a master's/doctoral program.	No	12	29.3	107	32.5	119	32.2	0.474(2)	0.789
	Sometimes	3	7.3	31	9.4	34	9.2		
	Yes	26	63.4	191	58.1	217	58.6		
The Ministry does not actively support scholarship recipients in terms of mentoring and guidance.	No	12	29.3	64	19.5	76	20.5	3.398(2)	0.183
	Sometimes	3	7.3	51	15.5	54	14.6		
	Yes	26	63.4	214	65	240	64.9		
I am experiencing delays in scholarship and school payments.	No	25	61	170	51.7	195	52.7	1.404(2)	0.496
	Sometimes	7	17.1	78	23.7	85	23		
	Yes	9	22	81	24.6	90	24.3		
I find the support for conferences and academic events insufficient.	No	17	41.5	59	17.9	76	20.5	13.362	<0.001
	Sometimes	6	14.6	43	13.1	49	13.2		

I am unable to receive adequate support from the attaché/advisory offices in case of an emergency.	Yes	17	41.5	137	41.6	154	41.6
	No	25	61	175	53.2	200	54.1
The fact that attaché offices/advisory offices hold unscheduled meetings is causing problems.	Sometimes	7	17.1	66	20.1	73	19.7
	Yes	9	22	88	26.7	97	26.2
	No	25	61	162	49.2	187	50.5
	Sometimes	8	19.5	71	21.6	79	21.4
	Yes	8	19.5	96	29.2	104	28.1

note. N = 370.

Asterisks indicate statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Education Level Differences across Postgraduate Placement and Employment Processes and Psychosocial Concerns with Counts, Percentages, and Chi-Square Tests (N = 370)

	Response	Doctoral Students		Master's/ Predocs		Total		Chi Square $\chi^2(2)$	p
		n	%	n	%	n	%		
I think the selections made by my advisor in Turkey are not appropriate for my academic field	No	24	58.5	163	49.5	187	50.5	1.2	0.548
	Sometimes	6	14.6	62	18.8	68	18.4		
	Yes	11	26.8	104	31.6	115	31.1		

I think my advisor in Turkey is sufficiently involved in my education process	No	19	46.3	145	44.1	164	44.3	0.2	0.906
	Sometimes	8	19.5	60	18.2	68	18.4		
	Yes	14	34.1	124	37.7	138	37.3		
I have not been adequately informed about the positions and duties of the institution I will be working for	No	19	46.3	82	24.9	101	27.3	10.39	.006**
	Sometimes	7	17.1	44	13.4	51	13.8		
	Yes	15	36.6	203	61.7	218	58.9		
I think I will find employment abroad suitable to my education and qualifications	No	13	31.7	115	35	128	34.6	0.19	0.909
	Sometimes	11	26.8	87	26.4	98	26.5		
	Yes	17	41.5	127	38.6	144	38.9		
My foreign advisor is knowledgeable and provides sufficient support	No	5	12.2	45	13.7	50	13.5	0.8	0.67
	Sometimes	8	19.5	47	14.3	55	14.9		
	Yes	28	68.3	237	72	265	71.6		
I think I will not be appointed to the positions promised in the YLSY Guide	No	26	63.4	159	48.3	185	50	3.36	0.187
	Sometimes	9	22	97	29.5	106	28.6		
	Yes	6	14.6	73	22.2	79	21.4		
Psychosocial Concern Items									
I experience anxiety about failing	No	9	22	70	21.3	79	21.4	0.68	0.71

Sometimes	14	34.1	94	28.6	108	29.2
Yes	18	43.9	165	50.2	183	49.5
No	7	17.1	42	12.8	49	13.2
Sometimes	9	22	55	16.7	64	17.3
Yes	25	61	232	70.5	257	69.5
No	16	39	104	31.6	120	32.4
Sometimes	17	41.5	130	39.5	147	39.7
Yes	8	19.5	95	28.9	103	27.8

note. N = 370.

Asterisks indicate statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4: Gender Differences across Postgraduate Placement and Employment Processes and Psychosocial Concerns with Counts, Percentages, and Chi-Square Tests

	Male		Female		Total		Chi Square	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	$\chi^2(2)$	p
Post-Graduation Placement and Employment Processes Items								
I think the selections made by my advisor in Turkey are not appropriate for my academic field								
No	119	54.8	68	44.4	187	50.5	3.91	0.141
Sometimes	37	17.1	31	20.3	68	18.4		
Yes	61	28.1	54	35.3	115	31.1		

I think my advisor in Turkey is sufficiently involved in my education process

No	83	38.2	81	52.9	164	44.3	10.33	.006*
Sometimes	39	18	29	19	68	18.4		
Yes	95	43.8	43	28.1	138	37.3		

I have not been adequately informed about the positions and duties of the institution I will be working for

No	67	30.9	34	22.2	101	27.3	5.35	0.069
Sometimes	24	11.1	27	17.6	51	13.8		
Yes	126	58.1	92	60.1	218	58.9		

I think I will find employment abroad suitable to my education and qualifications

No	70	32.3	58	37.9	128	34.6	2.72	0.257
Sometimes	55	25.3	43	28.1	98	26.5		
Yes	92	42.4	52	34	144	38.9		

My foreign advisor is knowledgeable and provides sufficient support

No	33	15.2	17	11.1	50	13.5	1.91	0.384
Sometimes	29	13.4	26	17	55	14.9		
Yes	155	71.4	110	71.9	265	71.6		

I think I will not be appointed to the positions promised in the YLSY Guide

No	118	54.4	67	43.8	185	50	4.17	0.124
Sometimes	58	26.7	48	31.4	106	28.6		
Yes	41	18.9	38	24.8	79	21.4		

Psychosocial Concern Items

I experience anxiety about failing

No	60	27.6	19	12.4	79	21.4	12.58	.002**
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I experience anxiety due to delays in life tasks (marriage, having children, starting work, income, caring for parents)										
Sometimes	60	27.6	48	31.4	108	29.2				
Yes	97	44.7	86	56.2	183	49.5				
No	28	12.9	21	13.7	49	13.2	1.82			0.403
Sometimes	33	15.2	31	20.3	64	17.3				
Yes	156	71.9	101	66	257	69.5				
I am unable to cope with psychological problems (depression, anxiety, stress, etc.)										
No	85	39.2	35	22.9	120	32.4	11.76			.003**
Sometimes	74	34.1	73	47.7	147	39.7				
Yes	58	26.7	45	29.4	103	27.8				

note. N = 370.

Asterisks indicate statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$