

THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME AS A SOFT POWER TOOL

by

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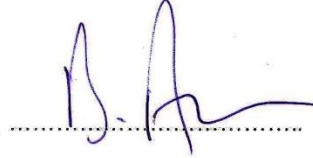
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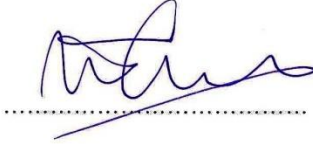
THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME AS A SOFT POWER TOOL

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## ABSTRACT

### THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME AS A SOFT POWER TOOL

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Branding

As the contour of world politics changes, the need for states to strategically design their foreign policy to respond to and consequently take advantage of the opportunities emanating from these changes become apparent. The current Turkish foreign policy can be situated within this spectrum. In recent decades, Turkey has taken a soft power dimension as the defining base of its foreign relations. In furthering this, a number of tools and instruments have been adopted including state-sponsored educational scholarship schemes targeted at international students. This study examined the main Turkish Government Scholarship Scheme (Turkiye Burslari) directed at international students. It emerged that the scholarship scheme has largely helped Ankara in the diffusion of its norms and propelled its objectives of becoming a regional super power and an important player on the global stage. Furthermore, it emerged that there is the need for certain reforms to be undertaken to address some challenges identified by respondents so as to enhance the competitiveness of Turkiye Burslari in relation to other scholarship schemes on the globe.

## ÖZET

### YUMUŞAK GÜÇ ARACI İLE TÜRKİYE BURS PROGRAMI

ZULKARNAIN MOHAMMED

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Yumuşak Güç, Yüksek Öğretim, Dış Politika, Türk Hükümeti, Ulus  
Markalaştırması.

Dünya siyasetinin yapısı değiştikçe, devletlerin dış politikalarını bu değişimlerden kaynaklanan fırsatlara cevap vermek ve devamında avantajlarından yararlanmak için stratejik olarak tasarlama ihtiyacı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Mevcut Türk dış politikası bu yelpazede tanımlanabilir. Son on yılda, Türkiye dış ilişkilerin belirleyici temeli olarak yumuşak bir güç boyutuna girmiştir. Bunu ilerletirken, uluslararası öğrencilere yönelik devlet tarafından desteklenen eğitim burs planları da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli araçlar ve enstrümanlar benimsenmiştir. Bu çalışma, uluslararası öğrencilere yönelik temel Türk Hükümeti Burs Programı (Türkiye Bursları) inceledi. Burs planının, Ankara'nın normlarının yaygınlaştırılmasında büyük ölçüde yardımcı olduğu ve bölgesel bir süper güç olma ve küresel sahnede önemli bir oyuncu olma hedeflerini ilerlettiği ortaya çıktı. Ayrıca, katılımcıların belirttiği güçlükleri gidermek için Türkiye Bursları'nın dünyadaki diğer burs programlarına karşı rekabet gücünü artıracak bazı reformların yapılmasına ihtiyaç olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Almighty Allah, my family and the less privileged in society.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AKP    | Justice and Development Party                            |
| ASEAN  | Association of South East Asian Nations                  |
| AU     | African Union  |
| BBC    | British Broadcasting Corporation                         |
| CIRP   | Cooperative Institutional Research Program               |
| CSOs   | Civil Society Organizations                              |
| DFID   | Department for International Development                 |
| EaP    | The Eastern Partnership                                  |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States                |
| EU     | European Union   |
| GNP    | Gross National Product                                   |
| MEG    | Mixed Economy Group                                      |
| MNC    | Multinational Cooperation                                |
| INGOs  | International Non-governmental Organizations             |
| IR     | International Relations                                  |
| OECD   | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development   |
| SPSS   | Scientific Package for Social Sciences                   |
| TIKA   | Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency |
| USAID  | United States Agency for International Development       |
| YTB    | Turks Abroad and Related Communities                     |

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background Information**

In the contemporary ages, politics has witnessed a number of shifts and changes in various dimensions. The interconnectedness of global markets and culture has contributed significantly towards this end. The consequence of this has been a shift in state policies partly as a response to this wave of changes and partly to ensure that states take advantage of the opportunities inherent in these changes. It is within this contour that the recent changes in the Turkish foreign policy are situated.

In the last few decades, owing to the vagaries of both domestic and external forces, the political landscape of Turkey has undergone a number of transformations leading to the redefinition of various state policies. Following the collapse of the cold war in the 1990s, the western orientation which clouded Turkish foreign policy between the independence period and the cold war period gradually gave way to a multiregional approach. Thus, an accommodation was made to establish connections between Turkey and its immediate neighbors and beyond into Africa, and Europe as well as seek membership in international organizations such as the African Union, Non-Aligned Movement, the Gulf Cooperation Organization and the Arab League.

Traditionally, Turkish foreign policy has been defined within the doctrine of ‘peace at home, peace in the world’ which establishes the logic of a nation-state seeking to protect itself against aggressive external and internal forces. In this regard, the founders of the Turkish Republic led by Ataturk held that the best modeling of the new state was within a framework of a western state (Lewis, 2002). This model was graciously followed through until the end of the cold war which ushered in a new international system described by scholars such as Mearsheimer (2001) as unipolar. The consequence of this change on the international front meant that a new window of opportunity has been opened for states to take a second look at policies that structure their external relations. As was the case with a number of states, this sparked a debate among policy makers in Ankara regarding what advantages Turkey can take in redefining its international role (Sozen, 2006: 22–5).

In addition to these international changes, domestic dynamics also necessitated the need to redefine the tenets of Turkey’s external relations (Aras, 2004). At the ending stages of the cold war, the Turkish political landscape was witnessing factional interests defined in terms of religion and nationalism, pushing for a stake in both the making and execution of government policies including foreign policy. The potency of these forces to infiltrate the policy arena was made possible by the pressure exerted by the European Union (EU) membership process for political inclusiveness of various groups in state affairs in accordance with democratic tenets. Consequently, the policy making arena began to open up to inputs of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and public opinion in general (Keyman & Icduygu, 2003; Kubicek, 2005). This development called for the need to adjust state public norm to accommodate private value and norm systems which subsequently shaped the different dimension that Turkey’s foreign policy assumed in the decades to follow.

Furthermore, the coming into office of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 and their political philosophy played a critical role in the diffusion of the political center of Turkey. Indeed, the party through its network of social groupings contributed significantly in opening up the foreign policy arena of Turkey. This worked in developing Turkey’s foreign policy arena into a multidimensional front employing largely soft power components by means of culture through education, tourism, among others. This resulted in, “... Turkey becoming a prominent humanitarian power, contributing more than \$1

billion in aid in the year 2012 [transforming] Turkey into the fourth-largest government donor in the world” (Akpınar, 2013). This achievement was on the backdrop of improved relationships with and taking special interest in issues in the Middle East in particular and other parts of the world in general (Robins, 2007).

Generally, the foundation of the foreign policy of the AKP government was crafted on the “Strategic Depth”, a foreign policy strategy authored by former Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutogul. The strategies espoused in this document relates to how Turkey can achieve a regional and global leadership through the use of soft power politics. This entailed Turkey taking steps to rebrand itself positively in the eyes of its immediate neighbors and the rest of the world as a ‘brother indeed’. Per this, CSOs and the educational sector are to play critical roles in the rebranding exercise particularly in the areas of implementing global humanitarian assistance strategies (Pinar Akpınar, 2013; Gullo, 2012)

Strengthening this further, in 2011, a wholly state-sponsored higher education scholarship scheme designed to attract talented international students was implemented. In the broader context of Ankara’s foreign policy, this scheme is to enable Ankara to diffuse the cultural underpinnings of the Turkish people to the outside world and foster a unionism of culture through the intermingling of the Turkish culture with other cultures of the world. Invariably, through effective and efficient implementation of the policies and programs underlining this scheme, the world would be drawn to the Turkish hospitality and rich history. In the end, Ankara would be positioned firmly towards the achievement of its regional and global political and economic goals.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The provision of higher education scholarship, a once limited domain of the developed world, is now witnessing an infiltration of largely emerging economies, redesigning their educational sectors to attract talented foreign students. This is developed as means of spreading their culture and creating networks outside the boundaries of the state. As developed countries such as the US, Germany, UK, Canada among others can be said to

have taken the lead in the use of higher education scholarship schemes to enhance their soft power, emerging economies are yet to take full advantage of these schemes.

In recent times, higher education scholarship particularly targeted at foreign students has become an integral tool for the projection of Turkish soft power. This has become necessary because attracting talented foreign students to Turkey is crucial in the transmission of Turkish culture and language abroad. In other words, through higher education scholarship schemes, Turkey would be able to establish a pool of ‘brand ambassadors’ for the rebranding of the Turkish image. The effectiveness of this scheme means that Turkey is afforded the opportunity to establish a network of ‘secondary’ Turkish citizens in other parts of the world that it can rely on in establishing and strengthening relations with other governments. By this, higher education scholarship is measured in terms of its relevance in “building long-term relations and developing them” (Nye, 2005:83).

It is therefore not surprising that the educational sector as a tool for driving a country’s foreign policy objectives has witnessed increased attention among academics, researchers and policy makers, many of whom have attributed this development to the increased importance of soft power in international discourse relative to the discourse on hard power (Nye, 2004; Demiryol, 2013; Krasner, 1983; and Keohane and Nye, 1989; Herz, 1957;; Osgood and Tucker, 1967). This development is aided significantly by the increased globalization of the new world with its institutionalization of common value systems by means of the continuous establishment and expansion of global political and economic institutions.

It is worth underscoring that the study on Turkish soft power is not new. Indeed, there are a number of studies that have examined various angles of Turkish soft power, from humanitarian diplomacy and development aid (Haşimi, 2014; Ozkan, 2010), to public diplomacy (Kalin, 2011; Ozkan, 2015). However, despite the connection between these sectors and the educational sector, few studies such as (Ydyrys, 2014) and Ozkan (2015) can be said to examine the role of the educational sector in propelling the soft power of Turkey. In Ozkan’s study, for example, higher education is identified as a critical tool in terms of public diplomacy. Specifically, the study indicated that higher education has the

potential to serve as an effective and credible communication tool for the Turkish government abroad. In addition, the sector if well-resourced can play a critical role in the modification and redesign of Turkey's soft power through means such as research, thereby ensuring that Turkey attains a competitive edge over others in global engagements. The author however bemoaned the fact that despite these potential, the sector is yet to be fully exploited by policy-makers. Generally, these literatures maintain that if given the needed attention and support, the educational sector can be a significant driver of a country's foreign policy objectives particularly its soft power dimension.

Despite this significant contribution to literature, past studies on the role of higher education in Turkish soft power have not addressed the specific issue of higher education scholarships targeted at international students in driving the soft power of Turkey. This study positions itself to bridge this gap by examining the role of the main Turkish government scholarship scheme (Turkiye Burslari) targeted at talented foreign students in projecting Turkey's soft power by extension the larger foreign policy objectives of the country in achieving regional power status and hence a prominent seat in the global political arena. In this regard, the study is structured based on the following questions. These questions are significant as they provide the appropriate platform which makes it possible for the future strategies to be employed by the Turkish government in its external relations to be predicted and examined.

### **1.3 Research question**

In order to provide the appropriate guide towards the attainment of the objectives of this study, the following questions are relevant;

- Why does higher education scholarship matter in the soft power policy of Turkey?
- What role does higher education scholarship play in the larger foreign policy domain of Turkey?
- What are the problems confronting this soft power tool?



## 1.4 Aims and Objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore the use of higher education scholarships targeted at foreign students by the Turkish Government to drive Turkey's soft power policy. Specifically, the study aims at the following:

- To examine the extent to which the main scholarship scheme established by the Turkish government for foreign students is used to drive Turkish soft power policy.
- To discuss the role of higher education scholarship in the broader Turkish foreign policy agenda.
- To discuss the problems confronting the Turkish government scholarship scheme and provide appropriate recommendations.

## 1.5 Hypothesis

Based on the problem identified and the objectives of this study, three basic hypotheses are identified as follows.

**H1:** This hypothesis is built on the claim that the establishment of *Turkiye Burslari* has helped in the diffusion of Turkey's image and culture abroad. The testing of this hypothesis rests on the result adduced from the analyses of speeches and interviews of YTB officials as well as the speeches of prominent foreign policy actors of Turkey such as the Prime Minister, President among others. In addition, the extent to which beneficiaries of *Turkiye Burslari* are willing to promote the Turkish brand by recommending it to others is also relevant in this case. It is also measured by the extent to which the enthusiasm of beneficiaries is whipped in relation to their acquaintance to the Turkish culture.

**H2:** This hypothesis is built on the problems identified as facing *Turkiye Burslari* which have the tendency of injuring the competitiveness of the scheme relative to others on the globe. In this regard, the hypothesis states thus; "the level of satisfaction with the scheme (measured by the level of satisfaction with the Turkish educational system) depends on the level of satisfaction with the language of instruction."

**H3:** This hypothesis follows from the second hypothesis and states thus; “the satisfaction with the language of instruction increases as beneficiaries spend more years in Turkey.”

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of any research or study are expected to contribute towards the literature in the field as well as inform policy direction of organizations; governmental or private sector. Consequently, it is the aim of this study that its findings will contribute towards providing empirical data regarding the basis for the establishment of higher educational scholarship schemes to attract international students. Even though there are a number of studies on the various dimensions of Turkey’s soft power, little effort is made in the examination of higher education scholarship schemes as a tool of Turkey’s soft power. In most situations, the data adduced is inadequate given the technique employed. Thus, this study is clouded with the expectation that with the technique employed, enough answers will be adduced.

Again, to the best of this researcher’s knowledge, there is no study examining the main Turkish government scholarship scheme as a soft power tool despite the fact that the educational sector continue to play important roles in the broader foreign policy agenda of governments around the world. Thus, this is the first study to address this issue and would therefore contribute to the literature by providing some empirical evidence on the subject-matter. Furthermore, given the importance of the educational sector in the larger domain of foreign policy, problems facing this sector need to be dealt with comprehensively. In this regard, the findings of this study and especially the recommendations put forward would help in retuning attention and reorienting focus on the subject-matter; hence enabling stakeholders in the field such as government to institute the appropriate mechanism in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the scheme.

## **1.7 Scope and organization of the study**

This study is constituted into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter and it encapsulates the background, statement of problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study and the scope and organization of the study. The next chapter is the literature review section of the study. It comprises the exploration of the concept of soft power, and examining the link between Soft power and education. The chapter also covers an overview of the theories of power leading to the establishment of the theoretical underpinning of the study, the evolution of Turkey's soft power, a review of past studies, and the examination of the concept of soft power and nation branding, among others. Chapter three examines the methodology of the study which covers the research design, target population, sampling method, data collection method, analytical techniques, and study instrument as well as the ethical issues relating to this study. The fourth chapter covers the data analysis and discussion of the findings of the study. It includes an overview of the Turkish government scholarship scheme, and the challenges facing the scheme. It further discusses the relevance of the scheme in relation to the attainment of Turkey's soft power objectives. Chapter Five is the final chapter of this study and comprises the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for appropriate actions to be taken.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter explains the literature on soft power and higher education scholarships. The literature review is discussed under the headings; Soft power, past studies on soft power and higher education, Concept of education as soft power element, Soft power and nation branding, Importance of Soft power and the origins of Soft power, and theories of power, among others.

#### **2.1 Soft Power**

The term ‘soft power’ was first coined by Joseph Nye (1990) in his seminar article “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power”, and further developed in Nye (2004a), in the book “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.” According to Nye, soft power represents “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments”. This attraction is situated within “... a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies” (Nye 2004a: x). This concept designates the power of a state to get other states to behave and act in ways that favors its interest through “...the ability to shape the preferences of others” (Nye 2004a: 5). Thus, the ability of a given state to get external actors (states and institutions) to give recognition to and play by means of its values, traditions and customs speaks to the spirit of soft power at play. In other words, by means

of soft power, a given state is able to get “other countries [to] admire its values, emulate its example, [and] aspire to its level of prosperity and openness...” (Nye, 2004).

Soft power is by no means a new concept. It has “always been a key element of leadership. The power to attract—to get others to want what you want, to frame the issues, to set the agenda—has its roots in thousands of years of human experience” (Nye, 2004). Historically, soft power has seen expression in the engagements of states across different borders. The spread of the French revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century had soft power as an integral part. In recent times, mention can be made of the English and American designed and executed concepts of democracy and capitalism (Nye (2011: 81-82). Indeed, to a large extent, the cold war is a case of soft power at play. This is because the basis of the war was largely of ideological conquest rather than hard core power politics.

The spread of the concept of soft power in recent times across various disciplines and frontline practices such as politics, media, and commerce can be attributed to a number of developments in the field of International Relations and Political Science in general. First, the peaceful means by which the cold war ended exonerated an academic interest in the concept. Eventually, dedicated publication grounds for foreign policy articles (Mullen & Ganguly 2012; Dinda 2015), institutional design to further the development of the field through research such as the Institute of Governance, UK, and the America Center for Foreign Policy among others began to flourish.

In addition to these institutional developments, technological advancement propelled the reach of the concept and aided in its further advancement. The proliferation of the media both mainstream and social media as well as easy access to and reduction in the cost of internet made access to information much easier. This coupled with the general globalization of human affairs ignited a network of people beyond borders. In fact, travelling across states borders is much easier today than some decades ago albeit the controls held at the mercies of visas and papers. In a recent report of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a statistics attributed to the World Tourism Organization indicates that international trips by Chinese travellers alone had exploded “from 10 million in 2000 to 83 million in 2012” (BBC 2014). What this means is that increasingly, new networks of people spanning one culture is seeing more manifestation, shaping broadly the knowledge base of individuals. Along the wave of this development is the

internationalization of private and public commerce beyond a single state's immediate borders, bringing to fore more players in the global arena competing for power.

From these changes come webs of opportunities for states to tap into. In the bid to position themselves competitive enough to gain from these opportunities, states have adopted a number of tools spanning different sectors. Higher education scholarship in recent times has been developed as one of such tools to further state attractiveness and connections abroad. Indeed, like Zewel (2010) asserted in the case of the US, investments in higher education, science and technology have the potency of creating lasting impression about the image of a country within the quarters of international audience thereby enhancing the soft power position of a country. This explains the rationale behind the new wave been witnessed in states designing and implementing policies and programs geared towards making their educational sector attractive to talented foreign students (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008, s.10).

Currently, the number of countries around the world relying on the provision of higher education scholarship as a means of furthering national interest on the global stage is increasing. The once closed circuit of the developed world is now witnessing the infiltration of emerging and even developing countries such as Turkey, Morocco, Brazil, Indian among others. This growth is as a result of the successful implementation of this strategy by the developed world. The US for instance, has now become an attractive place for the pursuit of higher education. Through this, the US is now able to easily maneuver with its regional and global agenda as it can count on the networks it had produced in other countries (Cooper, 2004:168).

Like any leverage tool in networking, states using the tool of higher education ought to seek the appropriate measure of the tool in order not to jeopardize the gains set to achieve. For instance, in the case of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, the rigidity with which the Soviets attempted to force their ideology on the Afghan people reaped resentment and mistrust among the Afghans which subsequently affected the achievement of the set goals governing the strategy (Filimonov, 2010:12). In other words, the policy design and the programs that emanates from the implementation of higher education scholarship schemes should not be overly nationalistic in nature and scope and should eschew elements of

compulsion. Striking a balance between the enhancement of the personality of the individual and the national interest should inform such policy design and subsequent implementation.

## **2.2 The Origins of Soft Power**

The origin of soft power in foreign policy has been attributed to the debate in the 1980s between declinists and modernists over America's global leadership role. Structured within the lens of the decline of English imperialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, declinists such as Paul Kennedy indicated that the US is experiencing a decline in its global leadership positions owing to the exhaustion that America is experiencing due to the overwhelming responsibilities associated with global superpower position. The counter arguments to this view were led by Nye who intimated that the claim set forth by the declinists does not comprehensively address the issue. He maintained that the failure of the declinists to position their argument within the context of the modification taking place in American foreign policy over the period was responsible for such conclusions. Thus, the end of the cold war means that "...Americans are trying to understand their place in a world without a defining Soviet threat" (Nye 1990b: 153). In sum,

The recent decline in U.S. attractiveness should not be so lightly dismissed. It is true that the United States has recovered from unpopular policies in the past (such as those regarding the Vietnam War), but that was often during the Cold War, when other countries still feared the Soviet Union as the greater evil. It is also true that the United States' sheer size and association with disruptive modernity make some resentment unavoidable today. But wise policies can reduce the antagonisms that these realities engender. Indeed, that is what Washington achieved after World War II: it used soft-power resources to draw others into a system of alliances and institutions that has lasted for 60 years. The Cold War was won with a strategy of containment that used soft power along with hard power (Nye, 2004).

In this domain, Nye highlighted that America had to redefine its global strategy away from the hard power dimension of the cold war period to more of a value system inherent in US culture. The effectiveness of the US in this regard he claimed sparked a wave of admiration for the US which has increased the acceptability of America's global leadership and

mentorship among countries in the world. Nye stipulated the policy dimension in this new frontier in the following terms:

If the United States were to follow policies that cut domestic consumption by the two percent of GNP by which it rose in the past decade, the richest country in the world could afford both better education at home and the international influence that comes from an effective aid and information program abroad. What is needed is increased investment in “soft power,” the complex machinery of interdependence, rather than in “hard power” — that is, expensive new weapons systems (Nye, 1990)

The pioneering leadership of Nye in the popularization of the concept of soft power received a significant boost through the work of Francis Fukuyama. In his famous work “End of History”, Fukuyama underscored the triumph of liberalism and its political values inherent in western democracy. This development enhanced the stance of Nye that the new global order is defined by ideas and culture. It must be underscored, however, that despite this significant corroboration, the confusion between hard power and soft power still rages on. Indeed, the inability of Nye to clearly identify the parameters of soft power impacted on argument set forth regarding the potency of soft power as a credible alternative to the concept of hard power.

In acknowledgement of this deficiency, Nye sought a revision in his subsequent works. In these works, Nye indicated that soft power does not exist as an alternative to hard power but rather a complement. Thus, “... [The] view, and the collective view of this commission, is that the United States must become a smarter power by investing once again in the global good – providing things that people and governments in all quarters of the world want but cannot attain in the absence of American leadership. By complementing U.S. military and economic might with greater investments in its soft power, America can build the framework it needs to tackle tough global challenges” (Armitage & Nye, 2006).

This clarity notwithstanding, Nye still entertained the notion that “Politics has become a contest of competitive credibility. The world of traditional power politics is typically about whose military or economy wins. Politics in the age of information may ultimately be about whose story wins” (Nye, Jr 2004). The need for a complementary relationship between hard power and soft power is underscored by the fact that even though “the United States had far more measurable military resources than North Vietnam, it nonetheless lost the Vietnam War” (Nye, 2006). Meaning, hard power by itself cannot



provide enough room for the achievement of desired states' goals in the annals of foreign policy, hence, the need for a complementary power underscored in soft power politics.

### **2:3 Importance of Soft Power**

The notion of power has largely been structured within the realist context of 'boots' and 'bullets'. The emergence of new paradigms particularly Neoliberalism and Constructivism owing to changes in the global system, from selfish pursuit of individual states to cooperation towards mutual beneficial outcome, staged a serious challenge to the notion of power anchored in realism. The notion of power (soft power) set forth by these paradigms has begun to attract significant interest among academics and even practitioners in politics setting forth a new wave of thinking and evaluation of statecraft in international relations.

A number of developments in global politics have played into the increased relevance of soft power in recent history. To begin with, the contemporary world has seen increased interdependence and corporation among states on friendly levels. This has become necessary because the new world has witnessed the emergence of problems requires the power of collective responsibility to resolve, and thereby tightening the contours within which soft power holds its relevance. Again, the process of modernization and its consumption of different segments of society into one collective has contributed to more interconnectedness and interdependence which makes significant appeals to soft power than hard power (Herz, 1957; Osgood and Tucker, 1967; Keohane and Nye, 1989; Nye, 2004a).

Furthermore, the globalization process has rendered the use of hard power costly and ineffective with states opting for a more cooperative environment than private selfish space. This globalization process has also resulted in an expansion of global actors. Due to the increased interdependence occasioned by the globalization process, non-state actors such as international multinational organizations, international and regional organizations such as EU, ECOWAS, AU and international non-Governmental organizations (INGOs) have become important actors in global affairs. The net effect of this is that the allegiance domain of the state is taking a significant turn.

As these organizations grow in strength, they contribute towards strengthening the cooperative base between their home countries and host countries on various fronts, political, social, and economic (Milner, 1988). These new players and their growing influence have enabled the spread of global democratic values which is gradually becoming an impediment to the efficacy of hard power (Haskel, 1980). This development has a significant place in the realization of global peace and security (Rosecrance, 1999; Nye, 2004b: 31).

Furthermore, the increased in the utility of soft power relative to hard power is held at the base of the threat of nuclear warfare. Recent scholarship in the area of international negotiation has been instructed on the cost of war given reverence rather to cooperation and negotiation which are at the base of soft power (Jervis, 1988, 1993, 2002). Indeed, many scholars have held that the availability and proliferation of nuclear weapons has presented a deterrent stage in the relationship between states and particularly the utility of hard power (Mueller, 1988). In sum, the advancement in technology and its utility in the annals of military hardware presented an unequivocal evidence of the danger inherent in the use of hard power and hence an increase in the utility of friendship, negotiation and cooperation between and among states.

In addition, the globalization of the world which has set the stage for increased connectedness between states developed in its wave a common international value system anchored on global democratic values. The democratic peace theory, for instance, holds its genesis to this common value system. Per the logic inherent in this system, the world stands to be a peaceful place for the progress and prosperity of all if states establish and promote common value systems because these systems breed friendship and cooperation towards the resolution of common global problems (Doyle, 1997; Russett and Oneal, 2001; Ray, 1995). Moreover, these systems have the capacity to check the abuse of state powers by subjecting the power of the state to the control of citizens. This would propel national leaders towards more liberal foreign policy rather than hardcore power engagements.

Connected to the development of common global democratic values is the growth and increased influence of international interstate organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization and regional and sub-regional organizations such as the African Union, European Union, ASEAN among a host of others. The basic tenant of these

institutions has been to foster democratic values and increase cooperation among states in the resolution of common global problems. Indeed, the existence of these international interstate organizations has worked towards the projection of the utility of soft power as against the utility of hard power (Krasner, 1983: Keohane and Nye, 1989).

Finally, changes in the economic and social landscape have played to the utility of soft power in contemporary times. The massive economic growth with its associated improvement in human conditions presented a challenge to the traditional definition of wealth and power which characterized most of the interstate wars in the past. States today are shifting attention towards the building of economic powerhouses as a means of achieving political supremacy rather than the past dictates of using political power to achieve economic and social progress. Thus, the new liberal economic argument coupled with its political ideals in democracy has shifted the notion of state security and survival away from purely military security concerns to more of economic security and social cohesion (Gallarotti 2000 and Ruggie 1983).

In summary, the world has gone through significant developments over the past decades. These developments have resulted in the consideration of new paradigms and perspectives in the analyses of global engagement among states. The complexities that these developments have unleashed make the analyses of global politics in light of purely realist spectrum challenging. Indeed, these developments mean that a comprehensive analysis of current global politics cannot be achieved in the absence of certain power tools largely anchored in soft power. As significant as soft power is becoming in recent literature in international politics, there are a number of factors that are militating against the realization of its full potentials. As Jervis (2002) identified, communication problems among states generated by past cases of mistrust and cheating is hindering the effective cooperation among states on the global stage. As a solution to this, soft power tools such as education and culture exchange should be given a pride of place in state engagements.

#### **2.4 Soft Power and Higher Education, past studies**

The tool of higher education scholarship has years found expression in the foreign policy design of major Western states like the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and

Australia among others. It has become a means by which these countries sold out their values and civilization to the rest of the world. In fact, the system has enabled these states to establish a proxy citizenship base in other countries. This provides a means to infiltrate key states installations of other countries with their value system. The proxy citizen networks also become means by which these states can further increase their competitiveness in the face of competition for control in global affairs.

Basically, the attractiveness of this tool in the annals of foreign policy of states is the realization that the educational system of a country apart from being the avenue for the production and development of the human capital harbors a platform that can accommodate different norms and value systems. As the educational system of a country is made accessible and attractive to students from different states, various perspectives on issues are harnessed and hence broaden the perspectives of one's own citizenry (Stetar et al (2010: 193). Additionally, as observed by Shields and Edwards (2010: 237), the "pattern of student mobility from periphery to core countries has been widely accepted as a mutually beneficial, or symbiotic, relationship". Host states realized some tremendous cultural impact on its citizens and view the educational sector as a tool which enables them to put in a good negotiation position in the future. Similarly, sending nations also benefit from trained human resources clouded with different perspectives and cultures.

In recent times, attention has been focused on examining the impact of the various tools employed by states to advance their soft power. In the area of the impact of higher education on foreign policy, mention can be made of a study by Cheung et al (2001) that examined the "influence of high-quality human capital, local and global human network, and high-valued intellectual capacity [in the formation of] an intangible regional network and leadership position, which will extend [a country's] long-term political, cultural, and social impacts in a region and beyond" (Cheng, Cheung & Yuen 2011: 481-482). The study found that the necessity of higher education scholarship goes beyond the short term benefits that states stand to gain. It also harbors the long-term socio-cultural benefits inherent in the current construction of social networks. This view is furthered by Mok (2012:226) in the arena of global economic engagement. From this perspective, for a particular state to be more competitive in global economic engagements, networks must be

established in other countries which the said state can fall on in the future to ease business flows and transactions.

Still on the nexus between higher education scholarship and global competitiveness, Liping Bu (1999) (cited in Shields & Edwards, 2010: 236) observed a link between higher education and foreign aid. He found that “thirty-three universities with the highest foreign student enrolment (forty-two per cent of total foreign student population) were also most heavily involved in... university contracts for foreign aid.” Similarly, Barnett and Wu (1995) indicated that exchange students were utilized by both the Western and Eastern blocs during the cold war period as a means of projecting power and presenting their ideologies in a positive light (Barnett and Wu 1995). What these findings indicate is that higher education is an effective tool for driving states political and economic agenda on the global stage.

Furthermore, Deodato and Borkowska (2014: 5), taking the argument against the backdrop of dispute resolution and reconciliation, argued that the educational sector presents a door for the taping of “unbiased perspectives on historical, political, cultural and economic issues... (giving prominent to the) exchange of ideas, information, arts and culture on the one hand and the cascade effect of education on the other facilitate the academic soft power performance.” From this perspective, one can identify the role that higher educational institutions have played and continue to play in conflict resolution across the world. They have served as vehicles through which conflicting parties are brought together to facilitate understanding and increase tolerance.

In addition, Botonero’s (2013) study on the implementation of the EU’s Tempus programme in Russia and Egypt reveals that higher education has been an important tool in the projection of EU’s influence in these countries. This has propelled a willingness on the part of the EU to commit more resources towards expanding the program. Reemphasizing this, an Officer of the European Commission interviewed as part of the study indicated thus;

“[Investing in educational] programmes and policies have had a positive influence in the [neighboring] countries, and the other way round. We have learnt much more about their people. If we know how they are educated, about their culture, we get to know a little bit more about their souls and what makes them tick. That is important because on issues like trade, or other very dry sectors, we do not actually get to

know about the fabric of their society, just what they do or produce. And this is not enough to enter in collaboration with other people” (Botonero, 2013). Thus, “by looking to the outside we can not only learn, but we also show a responsiveness to the needs of the rest of the world” (Campbell, 2006, 7, 4), in a way that ensures mutual benefits. Similar findings are arrived at by Trilokekar (2010) in his study of the Influence of INGOs on national education policies aimed at projecting EU’s soft power.

Following suit, Polglase (2013) sought to uncover the effectiveness of the EU’s higher education as a soft power tool in the context of Belarus. The study concluded that higher education has served as a means by which the EU promotes mutual understanding and cooperation. Thus, the “EU has demonstrated significant leverage through the use of higher education as soft power by promoting its culture, political values and foreign policies to the EaP countries” (Polglase, 2013). However, owing to political bottlenecks inherent in the Belarus educational system, Polglase noted that the effectiveness of the tool is under threat. In sum, what this study points to is that the effectiveness of higher education as a soft power tool depends on the two entities concerned; beneficiaries and the provider. Thus, if the condition in one nation is favorable for the employment of the tool while the other presents a challenging atmosphere, the policy is likely to suffer deficits in efficiency and effectiveness. Likewise, as the study of Yang (2010) pointed out, domestic forces can rob off a country of the gains it sets to achieve through this soft power tool.

From a comparative perspective, Chia (2015) undertook to understand the impact of the internationalization of higher education by Singapore and the EU on their foreign policy. He found out that, in both cases, the internationalization of higher education is one of the major tools take has contributed in enhancing their global competitiveness (Chia, 2015: 1-10). In short, the study found a significant link between foreign policy decision-making and the internationalization of higher education even though the effectiveness of the policy was clearly not identified by the scholar as it is the case in the study of Biebar and Martens (2011) on the “OECD PISA Study as a Soft Power in Education: Lessons from Switzerland and the US.”

Similarly, recounting the effectiveness of the U.S. soft power driven by education, Ahmed Zewail (2010) presenting a personal experience as a young Egyptian student in the U.S indicated that the most attractive part of US culture has to do with its leadership in science and technology. Indeed, Zewail quoted a survey involving 43 countries on the subject

matter of U.S. soft power to support this claim. Per the results of the survey cited, a significant 79 percent of respondents indicated that "...what they most admire about the United States is its leadership in science and technology" (Zewail, 2010). Thus, through this means, the U.S. has been able to couch a niche of admiration for itself across the world. In fact, many countries now look up to the U.S.'s leadership in this regard and aspire to reach such levels.

In the Turkish case which forms the basis of this study, mention can be made of the study by Ozkan (2015) which indicated that higher education has the potential to serve as an effective and credible communication tool for the Turkish government. Aside this study, there are a number of studies that have examined other dimensions of Turkish soft power such as the humanitarian dimension. A major characteristic of studies such as Ozkan (2010) is that they examined the educational sector in Turkey's soft power in a general fashion, hence a gap in literature that this study aspires to fill. Thus, this study emerges as the first to explore Turkey's foreign policy by specifically examining the component of higher education scholarship on Turkey's soft power policy. As indicated in other studies, the potency of this tool (higher education scholarship) in furthering the soft power of a state necessitates its investigations. "Nations and groups will likely continue to cooperate, but also use higher education to compete with their perceived rivals; it seems inevitable that nations will use universities as a primary means to project their soft power and gain strategic political advantage" (Stetar et al, 2010: 201).

## **2.5 The concept of education as an element of soft power**

According to Nye, the modern history of higher education as an instrument of soft power can be traced back to the post war Europe era. Within this period, the United States witnessed the movement of over 50,000 citizens of the Soviet Union within a space of three decades (1958-1988) (Nye, 2004b, p. 14). The widening of the Turkish political and policy arena in recent times has provided the opportunity for the inputs of others who were hitherto left out of the policy making arena. This has seen institutions such as schools, NGOs, media, private sector players and industries among others playing key roles in both

policy-making and implementation (Szondi, 2008, 17; Signitzer, 2008, 209; Sancar, 2012, 91).

The educational sector is one of the sectors that have gained significance in the new opening granted in the Turkish foreign policy space. The relevance of the sector as Turkey positions itself to explore other regions of the world that in the past have been relegated to the backburner cannot be underestimated. Universities use their platforms to organize conferences, symposiums, congresses and seminars which bring scholars all over the world together to discuss relevant issues and profess solutions to pressing social and humanitarian issues across the globe. Aside the new knowledge adduced through these activities, opportunity is presented for public relations (PR) regarding a country's strengths. That's a propaganda regarding the areas of a country's dominance is easily relayed through these arrangements.

Furthermore, the stature of institutions of higher learning which places them above political and other coloration positions them as credible senders and receivers of relevant information (Sancar, 2012, 92). In other words, due to their professionalism and tag as a place for research and knowledge acquisition, universities are held in high esteem and their words are much valued as representing the reality than other institutions largely designed on the wavelength of diversity such as religious institutions, and government representatives among others.

Additionally, universities are clothed with both the host country's cultural values and their own value systems. These values are transmitted to the academic community both foreign and local. Besides, the university community comprises of persons from different walks of life clouding a diversity of ideas, culture and value system waived into one fabric of a common university value system. This presents it as an important platform in the effort to restructure state image and identity particularly in an era of increased competitiveness. It is therefore no wonder that policy players in the international arena are beginning to take advantage of this envious stature of the educational sector in the design of their foreign policies.

The gaining of more currency of soft power in recent times in the annals of foreign policy has increased the relevant of the educational sector the more. Indeed, one cannot lose sight of the spikes in the design of state foreign policy to include higher educational scholarship



targeted at foreign or international students. Even though, countries in the Western hemisphere have taken the lead in this direction, the increasing economic prosperity occasioned by increased globalization of the world system has meant that countries who hitherto neglected this structure due to difficulties in their economies are beginning to give it serious attention.

## **2.6 Soft Power and Nation Branding**

State branding (Olins, 2002; Anholt, 1998) is a practice that has existed over a long period of time. Indeed, in the seventeenth century, France made significant efforts towards rebranding to project the uniqueness of the country and its people, an effort which the architects structured on the pillars of national pride and power (Melissen, 2005). Despite this historical base, the subject of state branding on the academic front can be said to be a relatively new phenomenon (Fan, 2006; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Indeed, the academic landscape is yet to converge on whether image branding can be attributed to the state same as goods and services (Aldersey-Walliam, 1998; Gudjonsson, 2005). Aside low academic interest in the subject area, the consuming public has remained disinterested in the pie resulting in an effort to rebrand the concept as “competitive identity” (Anholt, 2007), intimating a process involving the use of public diplomacy and brand management to foster the competitiveness of a state in relation to others.

These setbacks notwithstanding, one can observe a modest and gradual flourishing of interest in the subject area in the last few decades (Dinnie, 2007). As a benchmark, the increasing commercialization of global engagement has consumed the states in the marketing drive towards ensuring its attractiveness to other players on the global arena. The rationale behind this is to make state more competitive. The efforts by South Korea in the 1980s and currently China, Turkey and other emerging economies to rebrand their image in the world is to take advantage of recent global interconnectedness. No wonder increasingly, one observes the increased trend of advertisements of states on international media outlets such as the BBC, CNN, and Aljazeera, among others.

Furthermore, in the contemporary age of information, image branding has become a significant way of sending messages about important attributes of a state to a wider

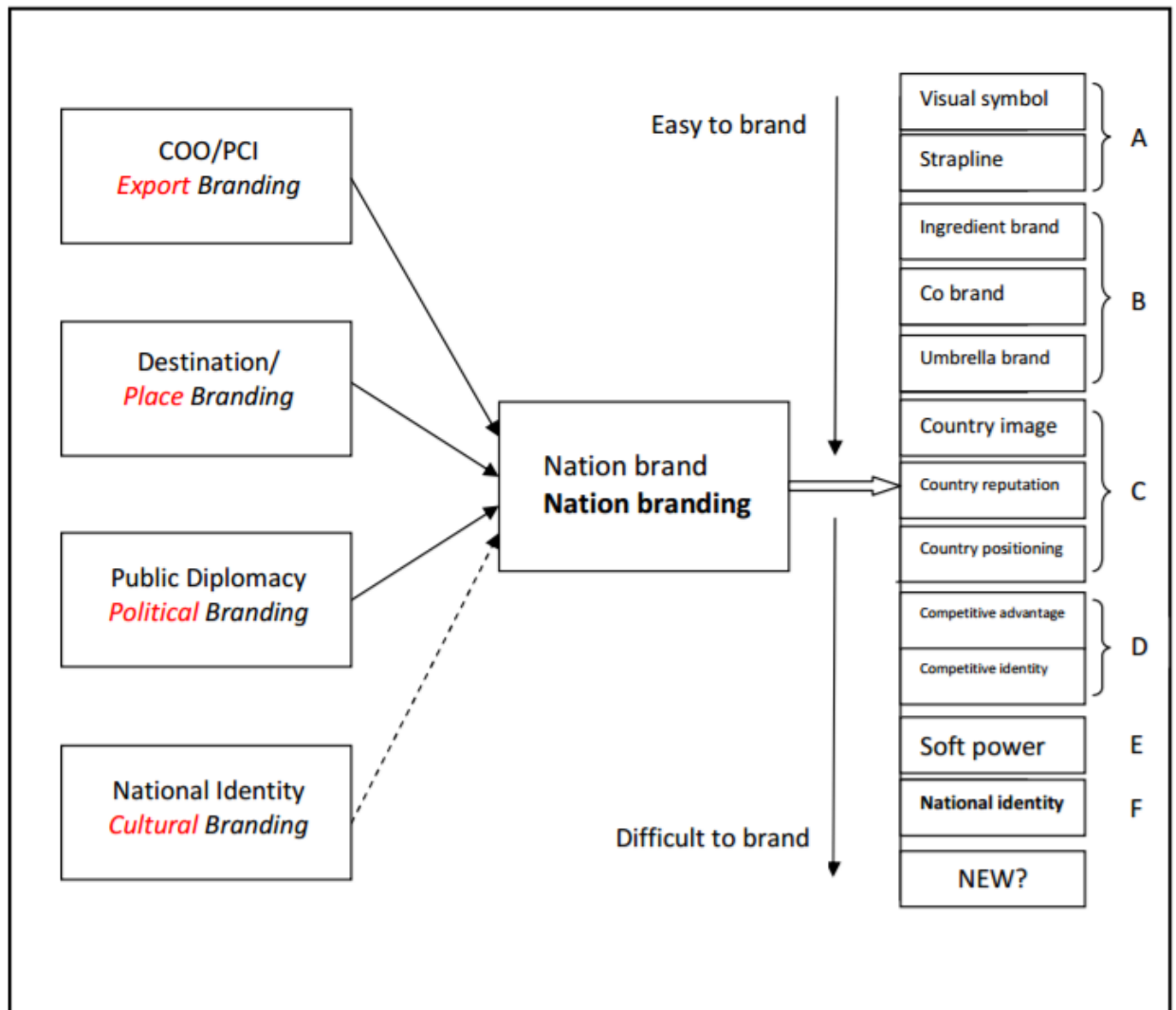
audience. Thanks to improved technology and media coverage, states are able to dispel negative images about them among other states. For example, among other things, the attachment of an under-secretary for public diplomacy to the US State Department is meant to “turn around anti-American sentiment in the world”<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the office is tasked to project a positive image of the U.S. in a bid to make America attractive to states which view the US in a negative light.

The effort by the U.S. feeds into the larger spectrum of foreign policy drive anchored on soft power. Thus, state branding can be an effective tool that can be used in the development and projection of a state’s soft power policy. As the effectiveness of hardcore powers declines in the face of increased global value system contoured on friendship, soft power takes shape and now drives all dimensions of human endeavor. However, to transform soft power from its intangible stature into more tangible resource, the cultural industry of states has to be developed. This is the base upon which educational scholarship for foreign students attain its relevance. This is summarily presented in Figure 2.1 below.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prwatch.org/spin/2005/07/3862/propaganda-czar-be-say-shes-eager-listen>

**Figure 2.1: The Concept of Nation Branding: Origins and Interpretations**



Source: Fan 2010

## 2.7 Theories of International relations

In an attempt to explain the various dynamics encapsulating the issue of foreign relations, scholars in the field of International Relations (IR) have devised various theoretical instruments which have sought to project the base and rationale surrounding the workings of the international system and the behavior of actors therein. This is couched around the interest and the objectives that these actors principally being the state, wish to achieve in their relations with other actors. This section sought to throw light on some of the major

theories in international politics based on which the contour of this study in the academic circle is established.

This study relies on a convergence of the three major theories of IR discussed in this section. From the realist point of view, the study lays emphasis on the overarching role of states in the international system and the anarchical nature of global politics which necessitates the need for cooperation among actors. From the liberal perspective, a reliance on the idea that the need to overcome anarchy through the promotion of cooperation by means such as higher education scholarship schemes is adopted. Based on these schemes, the constructivists articulate that a case is made for the development of a web of common value systems which highlights the relevance of discourse and social integration.

### **2.6.1 Realism**

The realist perspective in international relations has defined itself as the base theory against which other theories of IR present their challenge. Indeed, realism is observed as one of the persistent and resilient perspective in the IR debate. This is not to suggest that the realist perspective is a homogenous set of thoughts shared by all adherents. In fact, just like the other theoretical perspectives on IR, Realism has different trends and areas of nuances. However, be as it may, the various trends flow from some basic foundations.

The most fundamental parameter guiding the explanations professed by realist scholars in relation to the workings of the international system is power politics. According to the realists, power is the sine qua non in international politics and the pivot around which the workings of the international system revolve. The definition and the baseline of this instrument (power) have however received different apprehensions by different scholars in the realist fraternity. These have centered on cases such as the acquisition of power by states, the measurement of power and the contour within which power is managed (Schmidt, 2007:44).

In his assessment of power, Max Weber held that power relates to “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite

resistance” (Weber, 1997). This management perspective of power is sanctioned differently by Hans Morgenthau who takes the debate from the reasons why states and individuals want to acquire power, which, in his view is just to satisfy a natural desire (Morgenthau, 1972:24-27). Strengthening this claim further, scholars such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearshimer have intimated that the satisfaction of this desire particularly by states has become more compelling owing to the absence of an ‘international police’ to ensure the security of everybody in the international system (Weber, 1997; Waltz, 1989:43). In other words, the anarchical nature of the world system is the compelling reason for which states engage each other in the competition for power with the ultimate desire being to ensure personal security and survival. This brutish, solitary and bloody appreciation of human relations forms the basis of the challenge of other theorists, the most significant been the liberals.

### **2.6.2 Liberalist Approach**

The emergence of the liberal thoughts in IR championed by scholars such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, is said to be a challenge to the perspective on the workings of the international system presented by the realist scholars. Even though liberals conceded to their realists counterparts on the fact that the driving force of the international system is competition for power to ensure survival, they diverge with them on how to acquire power. According to liberals, the presentation made by realists represents only one aspect of the pie and specific periods in history. With growing interconnectedness between states occasioned by globalization, cooperation towards achieving mutual beneficial outcomes rather than zero sum gains is taking shape. Thus, hard power largely measured in terms of military capabilities is gradually giving way to more soft aspect of power which relies on cooperation towards win-win solutions.

In explaining further these clouds of cooperation, liberals dwell on the recent democratization process taking place in the world upon which they have sought to build the democratic peace theory. According to this perspective, as states become democratic, they form a club of common value systems which stands in the way of violent conflict as a solution to resolving differences (Russett, 1993:35). Indeed, members in the club would

opt for peaceful resolution of differences rather than resort to violence against each other (ibid; 4). However, this does not neglect the fact that violence will continue. Liberals intimate that such violent conflicts are likely to be between democracies and non-democracies as each view the other as threat to their survival (Ibid, 1993:35). This point is promoted strongly by structuralist and intuitionists. In their view, provocation for war is likely to come from non-democracies than democracies. This is so because “democracies are limited to going to war by the need to ensure broad popular support, manifested in various institutions of government, and leaders must mobilize public opinion to obtain legitimacy for their actions” (Ibid, 38). This, they claim is not a feature of non-democracies and hence a wider space for the utilization of irrational tools such as wars towards the attainment of selfish goals.

In recent times, changes in the global politics and the failure of realists to predict the end of the cold have strengthened the position of the liberals. However, the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US has redirected the debate in favor of the position of held by the realists. This development has engineered a modification of the liberal position which subsequently gave birth to the neoliberals. Like their predecessors, neoliberals have also conceded to the realists in the latter’s claim that the most important actor in world affairs is the state and that the international system is anarchical. They however express optimism of cooperation in anarchy just like their predecessors and indicated that changes in the international system have brought to fore more actors such as multinational cooperation (MNCs), international governmental organizations (INGOs) among others, which transcends the borders of one state and could step in as appropriate quarters for the promotion of cooperation between home and host countries (Grieco, 1988:42). This view gives credence to the potency of dialogue and interaction in world affairs which forms the crust of constructivists thought.

### **2.6.3 Constructivist Approach**

The ending of the Cold War in the early 1990s followed its strands a shift in the IR debates in two layers namely, a debate “between rationalists and constructivists, and between constructivists and critical theorists. The catalyst for this shift was the rise of a new

constructivist approach to international theory, an approach that challenged the rationalism and positivism of neo-realism and neoliberalism while simultaneously pushing critical theorists away from metatheoretical critique to the empirical analysis of world politics” (Burchill et al, 2013).

The popularization of this thought was spearheaded by “...Wendth in 1992 and later by Katzenstein in 1996 who made it a staple of international relations (IR) syllabi around the world” (Cristol, 2011). In his challenge to neorealism, Alexander Wendth intimated that basing the workings of the international system only on the anarchical nature of the international system as the realist posit is misleading as it does not answer to how the anarchical nature of global affairs arise in the first place. According to Wendth (1992), the anarchical nature of the international system is as a result of the social structural which accounts for the interests and identities of actors. Putting it differently, the nature of the international system holds its base to a discourse involving an “intersubjective processes” by means of signaling, interpreting and responding to the exigencies of the environment (Wendt, 1992:396-406). From this viewpoint, “... an emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structures on the role of identity in shaping political action and on the mutually constitutive relationship between agents and structures” is expressed (Burchill et al, 2013: 188). By this, constructivists maintain that their theoretical trend provides a “systemic approach to understanding state interests and behaviors by investigating an international structure, not of power, but of meaning and social value” (Finnemore, 1996). Through this, constructivists intimate that the future actions and behavior of states and non-state actors on the global stage can easily be predicted.

In sum, constructivism draws attention to the relevance and role of social structures and discourse in International relations. Unlike realists and liberals who take the international system as given, constructivist emphasis on the sources of the nature of the international system as they impact on particularly the interest and behavior formation of actors (states). Here, ideas, Social norms, and ties among others, receive the pride of place as they give some level of predictability and forecast in relation to the future behavior and actions of actors. In a nutshell, “constructivism is not only useful to understand the formation of identities, the influence of identities, norms and values on state behavior, and social

learning about how actors change their identities and/or diverge in their preferences, it also contributes to the debate on when ideas and material interests matter” (Pinar, 2015).

## **2.7 Push/Pull factors of international students’ migration**

As an aspect of migration, the decision to leave one’s country to another in the pursuit of higher education is dictated by a variety of internal and external factors. These factors are basically described as the pull/push factors of migration (Altbach, 2004; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). On one hand, the push factors are held as those factors that pertain to the home country of the migrant that pushes the individual out of his country. On the other hand, the pull factors underscore the variables that account for the choice of destination. These are held as the positive aspects of the receiving or host countries that make them attractive to the migrant.

The variables classified as the push factors are sanctioned within the home country of the migrant. While some of these variables such as lack of appropriate educational infrastructure, poor connection between the educational system and the world of work, poor curriculum design, poor teaching and learning structure, and political crises among others compel students to leave their home countries, others such as the prestige of an institution are less compelling and require the assessment of the individual student.

Generally, the variables that strike as push factors in one domain can become the pull factor in others. For example, if lack of prestigious institutions in one’s home country presents the push for one to migrate to another country for higher education, the availability of such facilities in a host country becomes the pull factor that attracted the individual to that country and not others. In other words, there is rarely any study to suggest that one group of factors, either push or pull, exists independently of the other. Indeed, both factors operate simultaneously within the larger scope of migration. Thus, as the pull factor kick starts the migration flow, the pull factor ends it and cyclically begins another flow.

One factor that pushes students particularly those from less developed countries to other destinations especially developed countries to access higher education has to do with the availability of institutions for higher learning. The institutions of higher learning in most



developing nations are far inadequate and ill-equipped (Altbach, 2004; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009) forcing many of these students and their families to seek the satisfaction of these need elsewhere, largely in the developed world.

In addition, the absence of prestigious institutions of higher learning in many of these less developed countries pushes the individual student to other countries where these institutions are available. This is in response to the individuals need to fulfill the desire of pride and prestige associated with the choices he/she makes (Lee, 2005; Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, & Rhoades, 2006). In a survey carried out by the University of California's Higher Education Research Institute's Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) among first-year students in four participating universities, it was found that among the major factors accounting for the choice of destination for higher educational rests with the reputation of institutions in California. In other words, students are attracted to universities that have higher reputation in the academic circles. Driving these findings further, Lee, Maldonado-Maldonado, and Rhoades (2006) indicated that;

While the reputation of institutions lures domestic and international students alike, status and prestige become even greater incentives when committing to study outside one's home country. In this case, the prestige of studying in our U.S. institutions can serve as an economic pull for many international students (p. 553). From this perspective, even though this applies to both domestic and international students alike, the impact of the status and prestige of an institution of higher learning is greater on the decisions of international students than their domestic counterparts (p. 553). Given that the United States is host to approximately two-thirds to three quarters of the world's most influential universities (Rosovsky, 1990) and consistently has large number of its universities than any country ranked among the top fifty worldwide<sup>2</sup>, it has become one of the most preferred destinations for international students. Indeed, the U.S. stands as the country that receives the highest number of international students per annum.

As indicated earlier, a less compelling factor which plays to the efficacy of this prestige and status argument has to do with the cost-benefit analysis by students and their families. Thus, the likelihood of a student leaving his/her country to another for higher education is greater if the perceived cost of that investment is lower than the expected returns. In this case, regardless of the prestige and status of the university, if the expected return on

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<sup>2</sup>Times world higher education ranking, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

obtaining a certificate from a prestigious university outside the student's home country is the same as in their home country, migration is likely not to take place. Commonly, cost-benefit analysis is identified as one of the underpinning factors that draw students from particularly less developed countries to the developed world to access higher education (Altbach, 2004; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). To be sure, returns to investments alone does not encapsulates the whole picture, programme of interest also provide a case for a push into other jurisdiction for higher studies (Altbach, 2004). For example, due to lack of universities in Ghana offering courses in Petroleum and Gas with all its various dimensions, students who hold interest in these areas are made to look elsewhere.

Another factor that propels the exodus of students into other jurisdiction for higher education relates to the availability of supportive environment and facilities for effective and efficient teaching and learning. As is the case with access, most universities in the developing world are less equipped; lacking basic teaching and learning materials such as well-functioning libraries, science laboratory and resource centers, and well-qualified teaching staff among others which are readily available in higher institutions of learning stationed in the developed world (Horta, 2009; Marginson and Sawir, 2006). The effect of this is that students are propelled to make decisions in favor of the latter, hence a movement towards countries such as the US, UK, Canada, Australia among others.

Finally, poverty and deprivation which is held as one of the major factors compelling migration in general features significantly in the factors propelling the migration of students into other jurisdiction. In this case, access to scholarship in some jurisdiction such as the Turkish Government Scholarship Schemes presents itself as a factor drawing students from mostly developing countries into these areas.

In sum, none of the factors pointed out can independently account for the migration decision of students to seek higher education in other jurisdictions. In fact, the decision of a student to seek higher education in a particular country can be explained by the combination of virtually all the factors alluded to including others not covered in this study.

## **2.8 The Development of Turkey's Soft Power: New Instruments in Turkish Foreign Policy**

The relationship between Turkey and the rest of the world have been shaped by a number of foreign policy instruments ranging from public and economic structured tools to humanitarian tools (Kanat, 2014: 67). In line with recent efforts towards engineering a comprehensive soft power dimension in the annals of its foreign policy, the Turkish government has redesigned and positioned the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) in a way as to promote a positive brand (image) of Turkey abroad (Demiryol, 2014: 9). Established in 1992, TIKA is positioned as the international development cooperation of the Turkish government similar to the United States' Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom. The aim of TIKA is largely couched around the economic and developmental landscape. In other words, TIKA is stationed to promote economic, commercial, technical, and developmental cooperation between Turkey and particularly developing countries.

In advancing its technical cooperation, TIKA largely relies on education (scientific research) and capacity building (Özkan, 2012, 90). This clearly points to the fact that the educational sector is presented as one of the central component of the Turkish government's soft power (Nye, 2004). As of 2002, 'Turkey could boast of only 85 million US dollars in development fund, this increased to 1.273 billion US dollars in 2011 (TIKA, 2013). The 2013 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report placed Turkey fourth in its ranking of humanitarian aid donors' (cited in Aydın-Düzgit and Keyman, 2014). What these brings to fore is that a new paradigm is taking shape in the annals of Turkey's engagements with the rest of the world largely situated in the context of soft power.

Similarly, on the cultural sphere, in 2007, the Yunus Emre foundation was established as a means of promoting Turkish language, arts, history, and culture across the globe. The foundation is equipped with a research center known as the Yunus Emre Institute to conduct scientific research into the Turkish language and culture as well as into the cultures of other countries. The main aim of this endeavor is to unearth scientific routes through the power of education and scientific exchange to promote and strengthen

Turkey's relations with the rest of the world. Currently, Yunus Emre centres have been established in many countries largely in the Balkans and Europe including Albania, Belgium, Bosnia, Georgia, England, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Turkish Northern Cyprus, Kosovo, Lebanon, Hungary, Macedonia, Egypt, Poland, Romania and Syria (Kaya and Tecmen, 2011: 11).

Furthermore, in 2010, the Office of Public Diplomacy was established under the Prime Minister's office. The objective of this office like other offices for soft power engagement is to spearhead a public relations agenda in relation to the government's external affairs by designing vertical and horizontal lines of communication between society and state on one hand and society and society on the other. In operational terms, the office is to collaborate with CSOs and undertake research into the effectiveness and efficiency of government policy designs using instruments such as the universities (Kamu Diplomasi, 2010). Based on this structure, the government aims to improve the Turkish brand – positioning the image of the country in a positive light to attract positive international audience and opinion.

Generally, the structures put in place by the Turkish government in the projection of its soft power can be situated in an attempt to increase interaction and cooperation with the rest of the world. Within this scope, the basic driving force of the institutional setup put in place by Ankara hinges on the educational sector. The Turkish government took this a step further by establishing the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) as a body to oversee an established scholarship scheme for international students. As a body under the Prime minister's office, the activity of the institution is to oversee and contribute towards developing and strengthening Turkey's relations with other countries through education and culture.<sup>3</sup> From the forgone, it can be adduced that significant efforts is underway to strengthen the soft power dimension of Turkish foreign policy through a reliance on education and culture. Nonetheless, there are some internal and external exigencies that sit to challenge the goals and objectives that Turkey seeks to achieve through this tool.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/government-scholarships.en.mfa>

## 2.9 The Turkish Government Scholarship scheme

Like many governments around the world, the design of scholarship schemes targeted at international students by the Turkish government has been one of the tools employed in the projection of its soft power. The birth of the Turkish government's scholarships also known as the *Turkiye Burslari* is borne out of the desire of the Turkish government to enhance its relations with other governments through the medium of culture and higher education in a way as to present Turkey a competitive edge in its bid to establish and strengthen relations in the economic, political and the social realms.<sup>4</sup> Thus, through this scheme, the Turkish government “aims to build a network of future leaders committed to strengthening cooperation among countries and mutual understanding among societies” (*TurkiyeBurlari* guide 2016).

The scholarship scheme is designed to attract brilliant international students who wish to study for a full-time degree and short-term programmes in Turkish universities by providing them with packages that enhance their interests in such an endeavor. The scholarship scheme is aimed at enhancing Turkey's relations with other countries in the fields of higher education and culture. Administratively, *Turkiye Burslari* is manned by (YTB), an institution which falls directed under the office of the Prime Minister. The operation of YTB is collaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which forms part of the Board membership of the International Students Evaluation Board, and other states agencies.

Since its inception in 2011, *Turkiye Burslari* has awarded about 4000 scholarships annually, with an estimate of 6000 alumni the world over. From a humble application receipt from 50 countries in 2011, the scholarship scheme can boast of application from over 162 countries across the world in 2017<sup>5</sup>. Currently, *Turkiye Burslari* is a host to 16,000 international students, studying at undergraduate, masters and PhD programs, spanning different fields from the Social Sciences to the Medical Sciences (*ibid*).

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<sup>4</sup> Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017 <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/government-scholarships.en.mfa>

<sup>5</sup> *TurkiyeBurslari*, 2017 <https://www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr/en/english-home/>

Application to the Turkish government is online, combining both scholarship application and university admission and encapsulates the duration of study as follows:

- Undergraduate: 1 year Turkish Language course + 4, 5 or 6 years depending on the official normal duration of the programme.
- Master's: 1 year Turkish Language course + 2 years
- PhD: 1 year Turkish Language course + 4 years
- Research: 3-12 months
- Turkish Summer School: 2 months
- Turkish Language & Culture Programme: 8-10 months

The scholarship covers:

- Monthly stipend (approx. 600 for undergraduate and Turkish Summer School Students, 850 Master's, 1200 for Doctorate, 3000 for Research Scholarships and 1500 for Turkish Language & Culture Programme). All amounts are in Turkish Lira.
- Full tuition waiver
- One-year Turkish language course
- Accommodation at a state-run dormitory
- Round-trip air ticket
- General Health insurance
- Academic/cultural support programmes organized by Türkiye Scholarships

Furthermore, the majority of the beneficiaries of Türkiye Bursları study in the Turkish language. However, there are course areas and universities administering courses and programs in the English language and other languages such as French, German and Arabic. However, the applicant is obligated to meet the language requirement in order to be enrolled into these programs. The scholarship program is conceptualized under different categories namely; Ali Kuşçu Science and Technology Scholarship Programme İbni Haldun Social Sciences Scholarship Programme, Yunus Emre Turkish Language

Scholarship Programme, Islamic Theology Scholarship Programme and the special scholarship for Syrians.

Eligibility for Turkiye Burslari is held as follows; be a citizen of a country other than Turkey (anyone holding or who has ever held Turkish citizenship cannot apply), not already be a registered student at a Turkish university, be under 21 years old for undergraduate programme, poses a Bachelor's or Master's degree under the age of 30 for Master's programmes and under the age of 35 for Doctorate programmes, have at least a 75 % cumulative grade point average or diploma grade over their maximum graduation grade or have at least 75 % success in any accepted national or international graduate admissions test be in good health (medical examination required).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter represents the methodology section of this study. It presents the strategies employed by the researcher in obtaining data to fulfill the objectives of the study. This is structured as the research design, study population, sample size, sampling procedure, sources of data, study instrumentation, data collection method, and data analysis among others. It is generally acknowledged that in order to unearth the objectives of a research work, the research should be structured in such a way as to reflect the main questions underlying the study. In other words, the study should be constructed within a framework of scientifically accepted principles and procedures (Nachamias and Frankfort-Nachamias, 1996).

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a survey approach in gathering the appropriate data. The approach encapsulates the adoption of statistical tools to analyze quantitative data, adduced through methods such as face-to-face and telephone interviews, questionnaires, among others. The method usually aims at establishing the common relationship between segments of a study thereby providing generalizable claims regarding the subject-matter under study. In general, surveys provide cheap routes toward adducing scientific data regarding behavioral, attitudinal and belief structures of individuals and groups. Although surveys can be valuable, recognizing that if participants' self-reports are inaccurate, the survey will



have poor construct validity. Similarly, if the sample is biased, the survey will have poor external validity. In many cases, the survey method only gives a snapshot of what to expect in the general paradigm of the study in relation to time and space (Mitchell and Jolley, 2007).

In the context of this study, the survey method adopted involved an online survey and a face-to-face interview with beneficiaries of *Turkiye Burslari*. Whereas the online survey provided a snapshot of the opinions and expectations of the respondents, the interviews enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information in relation to questions such as ‘why’ and ‘how’. The logic behind this is that interviews hold significance in terms of descriptive study that tends to provide a window towards understanding issues in society (Weiss (1994). In other words, interviews are relevant in a descriptive study that seeks to interpret events within the context that they occur. In the case of this study, in-depth interviews were necessary to uncover the dynamics of *Turkiye Burslari* within the context of the Turkish soft power policy.

### **3.2 Target Population**

The target population of this study comprised beneficiaries of *Turkiye Burslari*. The study also covered the personnel of YTB and top government officials in an attempt to grasp the basis for the establishment of such schemes and their connections with other broader national and international policy agenda.

### **3.3 Sampling Method**

Respondents for this study were drawn from the population of *Turkiye Burslari* beneficiaries across Turkey using a convenience sampling method. This method was adopted owing to the difficulty encountered in accessing the complete list of beneficiaries. Even though the method (convenience sampling method) adopted is non-probability, thereby affecting the attainment of a representative sample, efforts were made by the researcher to capture as many beneficiaries as possible. Besides, since this study is

descriptive in nature, and not intended to draw generalizable conclusions, the adoption of such method can be said to be plausible.

The researcher utilized the social media group platforms such as Facebook, created by the beneficiaries across the provinces of Turkey. A sample of 195 respondents was drawn from the population of the beneficiaries. In addition, out of the 195 students who responded to the online survey, 30 students emerged for the in-depth interview. This sample was deemed appropriate because a saturation point was reached after the interview exceeded the 30th interviewee. In addition, the information adduced from this sample was for a descriptive purpose and not to draw a generalizable conclusion. Besides, this study is an academic and a small scale research in which a sample size of 30 to 40 is considered sufficient (Kwabia, 2006). A snowballing technique was employed in accessing the interviewees. Thus, the researcher relied on friends who are beneficiaries of *Turkiye Burlari* to get to other beneficiaries for the purposes of the interview.

### **3.4 Study Instrumentation**

In social research, data is adduced using various instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, participant observations, focus group discussions, case studies, and life history. The instrument employed for data collection in this study was an online survey and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire<sup>6</sup> for the online survey was structured along a similar questionnaire designed by Mixed Economy Group UK (MEG)<sup>7</sup> in a study on college experiences of international students in the UK. In the case of the interview, the researcher employed a semi-structured interview design. Meaning, a less structured procedure (Berg, 2004) was utilized. Even though, questions for the interviews were ordered, the researcher probed beyond the answers given by respondents to ascertain hidden dynamics (Sarantakos, 1998). This was made possible through the use of an interview guide which contained some set of questions structured in such a way as to reflect the purpose and objective of the study.

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to appendix A

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mixedeconomygroup.co.uk/>

### **3.5 Sources of Data**

In meeting the objectives of this study, both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Most of the fieldwork involved the administration of questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The face-to-face interviews encapsulated in-depth interviews and informal talks with international students who are beneficiaries of Turkiye Burslari. Also, the collection of newspaper articles, analysis of documentary sources such as the previous studies on Turkey's soft power and other printed materials (for example, newspaper cuttings, journals, text books, conference reports, articles and the internet), were utilized .

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

In the case of the online survey, two data analysis programs viz, the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and excel analysis were utilized to generate both descriptive data and correlation analysis. Tables and charts were used in the presentation of the data generated. In the area of the interviews, transcripts from the interviews conducted were coded and analyzed thematically, taking into account the objectives of the study. For this study, themes and patterns relating to the research questions were identified. Direct quotes from the respondents were used where necessary throughout the report in order to imbibe a case of originality into the study.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues always arise in research that involves human participants. Participation was voluntary and an informed consent was obtained from each participant after explaining the purpose and nature of the study. Respondents were informed that discussions would be recorded. Some agreed to the recording of their voices while others declined and hence the researcher took notes in such cases. However the researcher did explain to participants that recordings were just for the purposes of the study. The discussions were treated with confidentiality and anonymity. Throughout the data analysis process pseudonyms were

used. In sum, the researcher made efforts to ensure that no harm was brought to the participants.



## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **DATA ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study examined the role of the Turkish government's main higher education scholarship scheme (Turkiye Burslari) for international students in Turkish foreign policy particularly its soft power dimension. In-depth interviews with sampled beneficiaries of Turkiye Burslari were carried out. In addition, analyses of the speeches of political leaders of Turkey and officials of YTB were carried out. Finally, an online survey was administered to the beneficiaries which generated 195 responses. In order to participate in the online survey, a student needed to have moved to Turkey to undertake an entire degree program and be a beneficiary of Turkiye Burslari.

The study covered a number of themes including the educational and personal background of respondents, why participants chose Turkey for higher education, academic and cultural experiences of participant in Turkey and post-completion plans. The 195 responses obtained represented participants from 64 countries, spanning 16 provinces of Turkey. The participants represented a wide range of disciplines and levels of study; comprising of undergraduate students and postgraduate students (masters and PhD). This chapter presents the findings obtained after the analyses of the data generated as follows.

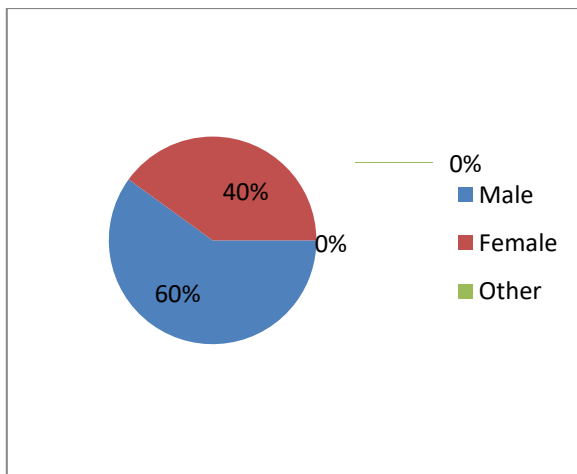
## 4.1 Online Survey

The online survey was completed by 195 international students who are beneficiaries of Turkiye Burslari. The respondents covered 64 nationalities. Majority of the respondents were from Ghana (36), Cameroon (10), The Gambia and Somalia (7 each), Benin, Kosovo and Mozambique (5 each), Kenya and Malawi (4 each) among others. The study covered students in 16 provinces of Turkey from Adana to Trabzon. Majority were from Istanbul (80), Ankara (30), Antalya (26), Sakarya (17) among others. The data generated from the administration of the survey is presented in both frequency counts and percentages using tables and charts. I turn to the specifics of the online survey beginning with the demographic information of respondents.

### 4.1.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

This section explains the demographic characteristics of respondents in the area of gender, age, religion, level of study among others. The section begins with the age and gender breakdown of respondents as captured in the figures below.

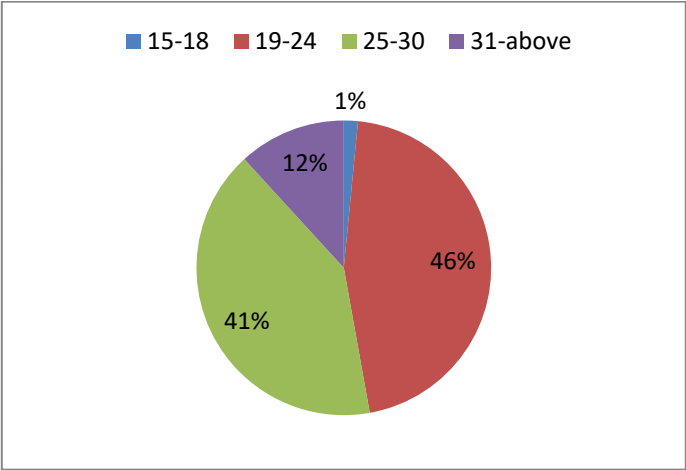
**Figure 4.I Gender of respondents**



Source: field data

The figure above presents the gender breakdown of respondents. Per this figure, the survey respondents consisted of 60% male and 40% female. Thus, majority of the respondents were male.

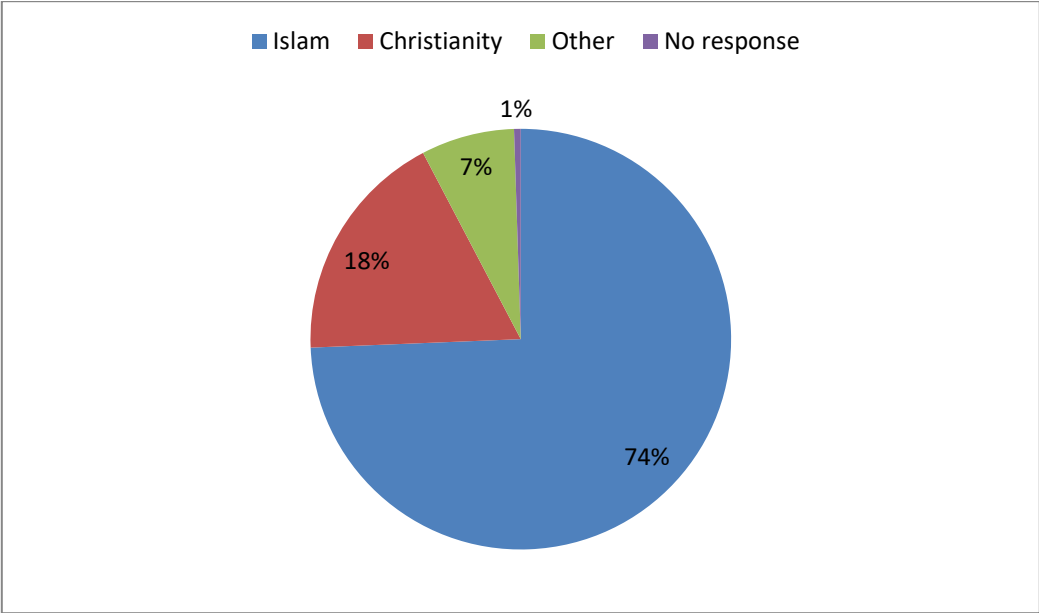
**Figure 4.2 Age breakdown of respondents**



Source: Field data

This figure covers the age breakdown of respondents. It shows that majority of the students were between the 19-24 years of age. While 41% of students were aged 25-30 with 12% aged 31 and above, only 3 students representing 1% of the surveyed were aged 15-18.

**Figure 4.3 Religious persuasions of respondents**

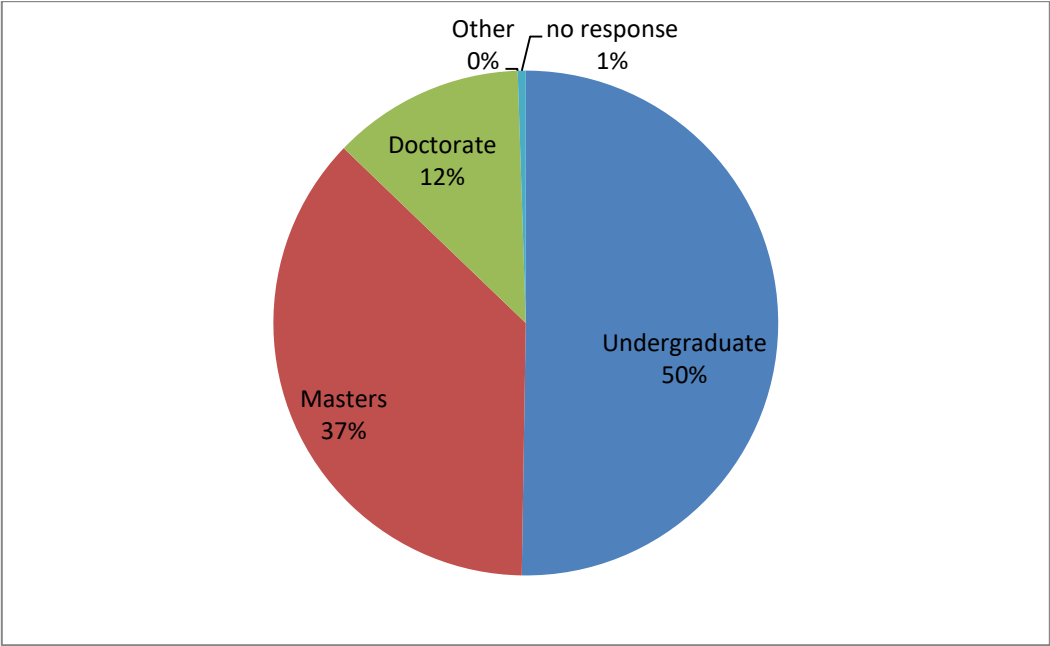


Source: field data

The figure above shows the breakdown of respondents in terms of religious persuasion. From the data, the majority of the students (74%) were Muslims. This is followed by 35 students (18%) who were Christians. 14 students (7%) answered to other religious persuasion and one student did not indicate his religious persuasion.



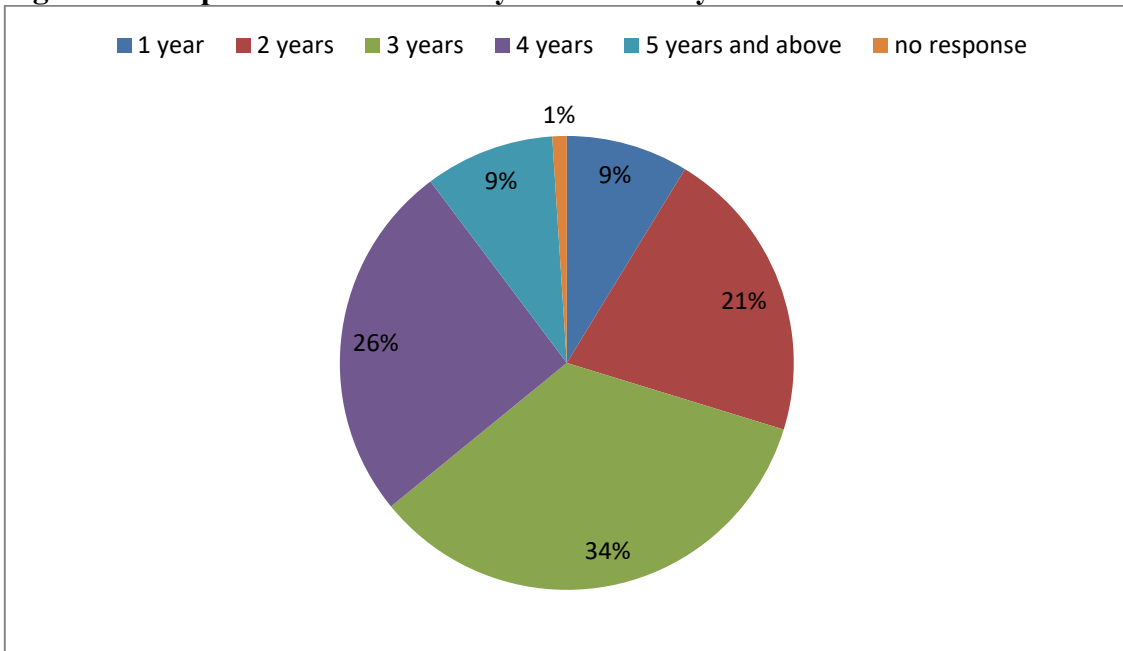
**Figure 4.4 Level of study of respondents**



Source: field data

In terms of level of study, which the data above represents, the majority of the students (98), representing 50% of the surveyed students, were studying for undergraduate degrees. This is followed by 72 students (37%) studying towards a master’s degree. Doctorate students represented 12% of the sample, while one student did not indicate his level of study.

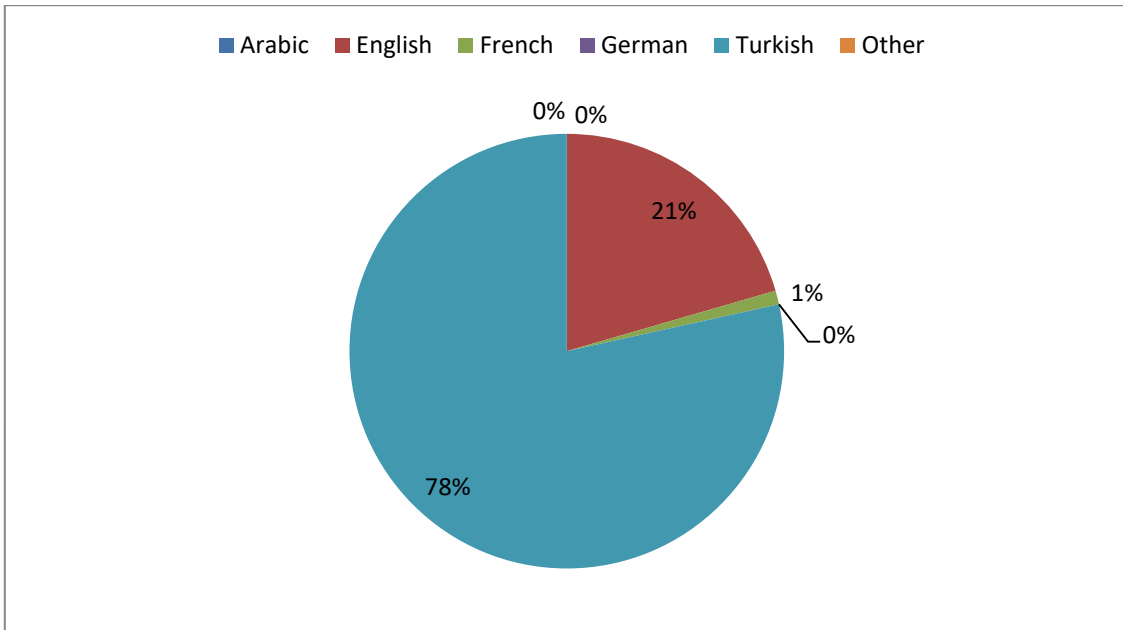
**Figure 4.5 Respondents' number of years in Turkey**



Source: field data

Although it follows that the majority of the students (34%) who took part in the survey had lived in Turkey for almost three years, 26% and 21% of the students are almost in their fourth and second year in Turkey respectively. Respondents who have lived in Turkey for five years and more represented 9% of the surveyed students and 17 students (19%) were in their first year in the country. 2 students did not respond to this question.

**Figure 4.6 Language of instruction of respondents**



Source: field data

In the area of language of instruction which the chart above represents, majority of the students (153) representing 78% of the surveyed students had their courses instructed in Turkish. Although 40 students (21%) had their courses instructed in English language, only 2 students (1%) are undertaking their programs in French.

## **4.2 Turkey as an Educational Destination**

This section sought to examine the factors that influence the choice of respondents to study in Turkey. It addresses the expectation of respondents prior to their arrival in Turkey and their verdict after experiencing the Turkish educational system.

**Table 4.1 Why respondents chose for higher education**

| Choice to study in Turkey   | Not at all Important | Unimportant | neither     | important   | Very important |
|---|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| (i) I want to study in a world class university                       | 17<br>8.9%           | 22<br>11.5% | 24<br>12.6% | 93<br>48.7% | 35<br>18.3%    |
| (ii) I want to enhance my employability prospects                     | 12<br>6.6%           | 18<br>9.8%  | 23<br>12.6% | 89<br>48.6% | 41<br>22.4%    |
| (iii) I am attracted by the location of Turkey                        | 25<br>13.4%          | 33<br>17.7% | 44<br>23.7% | 62<br>33.3% | 22<br>11.8%    |
| (iv) I want to take a specific course/program not available home      | 53<br>28.5%          | 38<br>20.4% | 38<br>20.4% | 35<br>8.8%  | 22<br>11.8%    |
| (v) It is difficult to get a place in a university in my home country | 83<br>45.1%          | 46<br>25%   | 23<br>12.5% | 19<br>10.3% | 13<br>7.1%     |
| (vi) It is cost effective (scholarship)                               | 55<br>29.3%          | 40<br>21.3% | 33<br>17.6% | 32<br>17%   | 28<br>14.9%    |
| (vii) I was encouraged by my family and friends                       | 23<br>12.4%          | 31<br>16.8% | 31<br>16.8% | 64<br>34.6% | 36<br>19.5%    |

Source: field data

It must be noted that just as in the case of some sections of the demography, the statements contained in this section were not answered by all the respondents. In other words, some respondents skipped some statements; hence the sum total of all responses is not 195 in all instances.

Following from the above table, the main points about each aspect of the factors that influenced respondents' choice of Turkey as an education destination are highlighted

below. For the purposes of simplicity, the presentation of the findings in this section and others is done using a three scale measure. In other words, the scale “very important” and “important” is reported on one scale as important. Similarly, “unimportant” and “not at all important” is reported on one scale as unimportant. The third scale is reported as unsure.

i) Desire to study in a world class university

A total of 128 students answered as important and only 39 students answered to unimportant the statement that their desire to study in a world class university influenced their decision to choose Turkey as a destination for their education. Only 24 students did not express any views on this.

ii) Desire to enhance employability prospects

A majority of 130 (71%) students viewed as important the influence of employability enhancement in their choice of Turkey for higher education. Only 30 (16%) students viewed employability enhancement as unimportant in the scale of factors that influenced their choice to study in Turkey. Some 23 (13%) students were unsure of the importance or otherwise of the influence of this factor in their choice of Turkey for higher education. This means that majority of the surveyed students think that studying in Turkey would enhance their future employment prospects.

iii) The geographical location of Turkey

From the data, the geographical location of Turkey influenced the decisions of 84 (45%) students is their choice to study in Turkey. While 58 (31%) students did not view this factor as important the, 44 (2%) students were indifferent.

iv) The desire to take a specific course not available home

The desire to take a specific course not available in one’s home country influenced the choice of 57 (31%). Out of the total respondents, 91 (49%) did not consider this factor as relevant in their choice, while a minority of 38 (20%) students were unsure of the influence of this factor in their choice to study in Turkey.

#### V) Placement difficulties in home university

Difficulty in finding a place in a university in one's home country was important in the decision of 30 (17%) of the surveyed students to seek further education in Turkey. However, 129 (70%) students found this factor as unimportant in their choice of Turkey for higher education. Only 23 (13%) students showed indifference.

#### vi) Cost effectiveness (Scholarship)

The cost of education measured in terms of scholarship was an important factor for 60 (32%) students. While 95 (51%) students did not see this as an important factor in their choice of Turkey for higher education, 33 (18%) students did not express any view on the influence of this factor on their choice of Turkey.

#### vii) Encouragement from family and friends

Encouragement from family and friends had an important in the choice of 100 (54%) students to study in Turkey. While it had unimportant place in the choice of 54 (29%) students, 31 (17%) students were not sure of the influence of this factor on their choice.

### **4.3 Academic Experiences of International Students**

This section of the questionnaire captures the academic experiences of *Turkiye Burslari* beneficiaries- taking into account the expectations of beneficiaries prior to their arrival in Turkey and the reality they encountered after studying in Turkey for some years. Similar to the section on why people chose to study in Turkey, the presentation of the findings in this section and the section on 'cultural experiences of respondents' also followed a three scale measure. Here, the scales "strongly agreed" and "agree" are reported on one scale as agree. Similarly, "strongly disagree" and "disagree" is reported simply as "disagree". The third scale is reported as unsure.

**Table 4.2 Academic experience of respondents**

| Academic experiences   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree    | Neither     | Agree        | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| a) My course/program is interesting and simulating                         | 11<br>5.8%        | 13<br>6.8%  | 18<br>9.4%  | 112<br>58.6% | 37<br>19.4%    |
| b) I am satisfied with the range of modules that I can study for my course | 13<br>6.9%        | 24<br>12.8% | 35<br>18.6% | 93<br>49.5%  | 23<br>12.2%    |
| c) What is taught relates to the real world                                | 11<br>5.9%        | 6<br>3.2%   | 39<br>20.7% | 103<br>54.8% | 29<br>15.4%    |
| d) I feel my course is preparing me well for my chosen career              | 12<br>6.3%        | 16<br>8.4%  | 22<br>11.6% | 96<br>50.5%  | 44<br>23.2%    |
| e) I am satisfied with the language of instruction of my program           | 57<br>30%         | 52<br>27.4% | 22<br>11.6% | 36<br>18.9%  | 23<br>12.1%    |
| f) I need more support for the language of instruction                     | 18<br>9.5%        | 27<br>14.3% | 34<br>18%   | 52<br>27.5%  | 58<br>30.7%    |
| g) The style of teaching in Turkey is better than in my home country       | 32<br>16.9%       | 37<br>19.6% | 66<br>34.9% | 36<br>19%    | 18<br>9.5%     |
| h) I am satisfied with the Turkish educational system                      | 20<br>10.7%       | 37<br>19.8% | 59<br>31.6% | 58<br>31%    | 13<br>7%       |
| i) The scholarship institution is very responsive to our needs             | 20<br>10.5%       | 24<br>12.6% | 36<br>18.9% | 78<br>41.1%  | 32<br>16.8%    |
| j) I would recommend Turkey to others                                      | 14<br>7.4%        | 11<br>5.8%  | 41<br>21.7% | 84<br>44.4%  | 39<br>20.6%    |

Source: field data

The findings in relation to the academic experience of Turkiye Burslari beneficiaries are summarized below.

a) Course is interesting and stimulating

Whereas 149 (78%) students agreed that their course is interesting and stimulating, 24 (13%) students disagreed with the statement. From this score, it can be concluded that majority of the students find their course interesting and stimulating.

b) Satisfaction with program's modules

Majority of the students (almost 62%) appeared satisfied with the range of options for their program. But approximately 20% of the surveyed students seem dissatisfied with the range of modules available for them to choose from. Close to 19% of the students did not express any view on this statement.

c) Teaching relates to real world

Majority of the respondents, 132 (70%), agreed that what is taught in the lecture halls relates to the real world. While only 17 (9%) students disagreed with this claim, 39 (21%) students were unsure.

d) Link with Career

Majority, 140 (74%), indicated an agreement with the statement that their course is preparing them well for their chosen career. 28 (14%) students had disagreement with the statement. Only 22 (12%) students did not express any opinion on this statement.

e) Satisfaction with language of Instruction

A majority of 109 (57%) students disagreed with the statement that they are satisfied with the language of instruction for their programs. However, 59 (31%) students expressed satisfaction with their language of instruction and 22 (12%) were indicated indifferent to this.



f) More support with language of instruction

Data from the survey shows that 58% of the surveyed students indicated that they need more support in terms of the language of instruction for their programs. It also shows that 24% of the students related well with the language of the instruction and therefore did not need any further support. Only 18% of the sampled students did not express any opinion on this issue.

g) Style of teaching in Turkey

The result shows that 69 (36%) students disagreed with the statement that the style of teaching in Turkey is better than the style of teaching in their home country. Contrary to this, 54 (29%) students seem to agree with the statement, while 66 (35%) were indifferent.

h) Satisfaction with the Turkish educational system

A majority of the sampled students, representing 38% of the sample, expressed satisfaction with the Turkish educational system. On the other hand, 57 (31%) students expressed dissatisfaction with the system, while 59 (32%) students did not give any verdict.

i) Responsiveness of the Turkish Scholarship Secretariat (YTB)

Out of the 195 respondents, 110 students representing (58%) of the sample seems to agree with the statement that the Turkish scholarship secretariat (YTB) is responsive to their needs. While 44 (23%) students disagreed with this statement, 36 (19%) students neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

j) Recommending Turkey to others

On the score recommending Turkey to others for higher education, majority of the students, 123(65%) expressed their willingness to recommend Turkey to others. While 25 (13%) students expressed their unwillingness to recommend Turkey to others, 41 (22%) students did not express any views on this statement.

#### 4.4 Cultural Experiences

The cultural experiences of a student emanates from the interaction that the student has with fellow students both within the classroom setting and without. Hence, the scope of the responses in this section extends beyond the immediate classroom experience to capture the everyday experience of respondents.

**Table 4.3 Cultural experience of respondents**

|   | Strongly disagree | Disagree    | Neither     | Agree        | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| I would like to mix more with Turkish students                      | 11<br>5.7%        | 26<br>13.5% | 41<br>21.2% | 95<br>49.2%  | 20<br>10.4%    |
| I would like to mix more with students from different nationalities | 6<br>3.1%         | 6<br>3.1%   | 16<br>8.4%  | 101<br>52.9% | 62<br>32.5%    |
| I prefer to make friends with fellow students from my home country  | 18<br>9.4%        | 29<br>15.1% | 65<br>33.9% | 59<br>30.7%  | 21<br>10.9%    |
| I would like to learn more about Turkish culture                    | 7<br>3.6%         | 12<br>6.3%  | 35<br>18.2% | 93<br>48.4%  | 45<br>23.4%    |
| I am satisfied with the quality of accommodation in Turkey          | 25<br>13.1%       | 33<br>17.3% | 41<br>21.5% | 62<br>32.5%  | 30<br>15.7%    |
| I prefer to live with people from my country                        | 19<br>9.9%        | 42<br>22%   | 69<br>36.1% | 44<br>23%    | 17<br>8.9%     |

Source: field data

Following from the above table, the main points about each aspect of the cultural experiences of respondents as captured in the survey are as follows:

a) Preference to mix more with Turkish students

Although 41 (21%) students had no preferences to mix more with Turkish students, majority of the students 115 (61%) expressed a desire to interact more with their colleague

Turkish students. Only 37 (nearly 19%) students were unwilling to further mix their fellow Turkish students.

b) Preference to mix more with students from different nationalities

From the table, majority of the respondents 163 (85%) indicated their preference to mix more with students from different nationalities. Whereas 16 (8%) students did not have such preferences, 12 (6%) students disagreed with this statement.

c) Preference for friends from home country

The table shows that majority of the students surveyed, 80 (45%) expressed preference to mix more with students they share the same nationality with. Whereas 47(25%) students disagreed with this statement, 65 (34%) students were unsure of their preference.

d) Desire to learn more about Turkish culture

A significant number of the surveyed students 138 (nearly 72%) confirmed their desire to learn more about the Turkish culture. Only 19 students disagreed with this statement and 35 (18%) students neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

e) Satisfaction with accommodation

Nearly 48% of the surveyed students (92) expressed satisfaction with the quality of accommodation in Turkey. About 30% of the students disagreed with the quality of accommodation and 41 (22%) did not express their views on this. It must be noted that nearly all the students surveyed lived in dormitories.

f) Preference to live with people from home country

The data shows that a significant number of the students 69 (36%) expressed no opinion regarding their preference to live with persons from their home country. Interestingly, the same number of students (61) who agreed with this statement is the same as the number who disagreed with the statement.

#### 4.5 Overall Experience

This section captures the general experience of beneficiaries of Turkiye Burslari both in the academic and cultural settings.

**Table 4.4 Overall experiences of respondents**

| Overall Experience |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Very good          | 39<br>20%   |
| Good               | 76<br>39%   |
| Average            | 65<br>33.3% |
| Poor               | 13<br>6.7%  |
| Very poor          | 2<br>1%     |

Source: Field data

From the above table, overall, majority of the students, 115 (59%), found their experience in Turkey as either good or very good. While 65 (nearly 33%) students rate their experience as average. Only 15 (nearly 8%) students rated their experience in Turkey as below average, thus, either poor or very poor.

#### 4.6 Post-completion Intentions

The logic behind this section is to examine the post-graduation intentions of respondents.

The responses obtained could give a clue to

**Table 4.5 Post-graduation plans of respondents**

| Intention post-completion |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Seek employment in Turkey | 18<br>9.3%  |
| Seek permanent residence  | 4<br>2.1%   |
| Further studies           | 33<br>17%   |
| Go to another country     | 57<br>29.4% |
| Go back home              | 80<br>41.2% |
| Other                     | 2<br>1%     |

Source: Field data

It can be adduced from the above table that majority of the respondents (80), nearly 41%, intended to go back to their country after obtaining their degrees. This is followed by 57 students, representing 29% of the sample who intend to go to another country. A notable proportion of 33 (17%) students intended to seek further studies in Turkey. While 18 (nearly 9%) indicated their intentions to seek employment in Turkey. Nearly 4% (4 students) of the surveyed students intended to seek permanent residence in Turkey.

#### **4.7 Discussions**

This section presents a detailed discussion of the results of the study based on the research questions. It begins with a discussion of the importance of higher education scholarships in the larger framework of Turkish soft power. In addition, a detailed discussion of the descriptive variables of the questionnaire is also presented. This is made richer by combining the responses obtained from the interviews of the 30 students that were sampled

from the 195 online survey respondents. The themes covering this section were obtained from the interview data and sections of the survey questionnaire. As indicated earlier, in a bid to protect the identity of respondents, pseudonyms were used in place of the original names of the interviewees.

#### **4.7.1 Relevance of higher education scholarship in Turkish foreign policy**

As indicated by scholars such as Aras 2010; 2009, Keyman, 2012; Akpınar 2013 among others, the once conservative western oriented foreign policy outlook of Turkey took a radical and ambitious turn upon the assumption of office by the Justice and Development Party (AKP). In addition to the already established contour of a peace-oriented foreign policy directed at its immediate neighbors, and inherited from the republican era, an ambitious plan drawn on a five central pillar couched in the “strategic depth” of Ahmet Davutoglu was developed. This was to enable Ankara to play a critical role in both global and middle east politics. By and large, the space was created for the involvement of actors who hitherto played limited role or no role at all in the foreign policy domain of Turkey. The net effect of this was the birth of Turkish soft power anchored on humanitarianism and public diplomacy harboring higher education scholarship as a critical component.

It is therefore not surprising to find the provision of higher education scholarship featuring prominently in the addresses of key Turkish foreign policy drivers such as the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, TIKA among others. In the wake of the humanitarian crises in Somalia for example, the speech of the then Prime Minister and now President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his visit to Mogadishu on August 9, 2012, contained a promise of providing educational scholarship to over 1,200 Somali students. This promise has gradually been rolled out by YTB and other state institutions such as Diyanet. Again, in the recent Syrian crisis, as part of a humanitarian assistance to affected Syrians, the Turkish government through YTB has designed a special scholarship package for Syrian nationals.

Furthermore, in an interview with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kudret Bülbül, the then head of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), he underscores the focus and objectives of the institution as follows:

“I think it will be better to explain why we are interested in international students. There are three fields of activity for the YTB. The first and foremost is to have a strong Turkish Diaspora. The second is to cooperate closely with regions that we have historical and cultural ties with, while the third can be defined as to raise friends of Turkey.” (Daily Sabah, 2015)

What this means is that the new Turkish foreign policy which rests largely on promoting cooperation and mutual understanding has higher education scholarship as an integral part. As underscored by the head of YTB, through this avenue, “...Turkey has transformed [itself] into a center of international attraction in education. It is important to state that the increased attention towards Türkiye [Burslari] is due to the increased attention towards Turkey in general. Turkey, with its advanced economy, matured democracy and improvements in human rights, has become a prominent country in the past 10-15 years. The success in these fields has contributed to Turkey's transformation into a center of attraction” (Daily Sabah, 2015)

As richly pointed out by the constructivist and liberal theorists regarding the potency of dialogue and discourse in driving states' external relations, the higher educational scholarship presents a platform for the establishment of common norm systems built on diversity and respect. Indeed, per the spirit and objective of Türkiye Burslari, there is a realization of the need “to build a network of future leaders committed to strengthening cooperation among countries and mutual understanding among societies” (Türkiye Burslari guide 2016). This clearly affirms the first hypothesis of this study which indicates that through the provision of higher education scholarships, the Turkish government has been able to defuse its culture and made itself attractive to other players in the international world. This claim is further strengthened by the responses of beneficiaries of Türkiye Burslari regarding why they chose Turkey for higher learning and their cultural experiences to which we turn our attention to in the following sections.

#### **4.7.2 Why Turkey for higher education**

Per the online survey data, the most significant variables or factors that influenced the choice of respondents' to study in Turkey were the desire to study in a world-class university and the belief that obtaining a higher education certificate abroad enhances the future employment prospects of the individual. It is striking to note that the cost of education in Turkey measured in terms of the scholarship offered by the government of Turkey did not feature among the factors that influenced respondents' choice of Turkey for higher education. This becomes more interesting when the results of the online survey are juxtaposed against the responses of the interviewees. Even though the two variables identified earlier were mentioned by some interviewees as important variables, almost all the interviewees indicated that their choice of Turkey for higher education was largely influenced by the scholarship factor. For example, Peter indicated thus, "I came here (Turkey) actually because of the scholarship package. It was the best option compared to the others we had. There was an issue with politics and education in my country, so schools delayed in opening...."

Indeed, others made the case that their coming to Turkey was due to the absence of better scholarship options. Evelyn, a 26-year-old undergraduate student had this to say: 'I came to Turkey because I secured a scholarship. Prior to that, I had a Brazilian scholarship but it was a partial tuition waiver. So, based on that, Turkey came as a better option for me.' Similar claim is made by Halil thus, "... I came to Turkey because I won a scholarship. It is for free and so I came. I came because I wanted to enjoy free education."

In addition, there were persons whose coming to Turkey can be attributed to mere accident. Thus, their coming was not occasioned by deliberate decisions on their part to that effect, but due to factors outside their reach. Malik, a 25-year-old undergraduate in Istanbul is one of such students:

"Well, I did not choose Turkey. I had wanted to study abroad all my life. I had since high school wanted to study in Russia, Brazil, India, the EU, and others... I came to Turkey based on a bilateral agreement in education existing between Turkey and my country. I made an application to the scholarship secretariat in my country and I was given Turkey. It wasn't a deliberate decision."



Similarly, Awal a master's student relates his coming to Turkey for higher education as follows:

In the high school exams in my country, I was one of the students who obtained the highest score... I did not choose Turkey myself. The ministry of education in my country did after I passed the entrance exams.

The strength of this variable (cost effectiveness) is even made stronger considering the fact that majority of the interviewees did not have or had little prior knowledge about Turkey. Even though, some students like Mavis, simply had little information about Turkey, others like Ali knew nothing about the country and the little information they claimed to have about the country was false. Mavis pointed out her knowledge of Turkey prior to her arrival as follows: "I knew something about Turkey which was from our history class... for example, I knew something about Ataturk and thanks to World Cup 2012, I knew Hakan Shukar who scored the fastest goal in the world cup". In the case of Ali, "... the capital city of Turkey was Istanbul..."

What the forgone indicates is that the factors that underpin a country's competitiveness in the arena of attracting best talents are not just the availability of scholarships but the perception of quality education and impact of that on future employment prospects. In the absence of these two variables, the impact of the scholarship will be minimal. In other words, in order for Turkey to make its scholarship scheme competitive enough to attract the needed talented students from across the world, attention has to be given to not just the mere provision of educational scholarship, but the quality of the educational system in general. Thus, reforms in the educational system meant to uplift standards of higher institutions of learning to world standards are the pivot for the successful implementation of a robust and a competitive scholarship scheme. Having dealt with the general expectations of students prior to and factors that underpinned their arrival to Turkey, the study examines the specific expectations and the post arrival experiences of international students in the next sections.

### **4.7.3 Experiences of International Students in Turkey**

Per the objectives of this study, the experiences of international students were covered in two folds viz. academic experiences and cultural experiences. In discussing these experiences particularly the academic experiences, credence was given to the prior expectation of international students before arriving in Turkey and whether such expectations have been met. The study also looked at the kind of relationship that exists between the Turkish scholarship secretariat (YTB) and the students. Answers to these questions were minimally adduced from the online survey. The interviews that were undertaken subsequently provided the details needed to obtain a clear picture of the discourse.

#### **4.7.3.1 Academic Experience**

In discussing the academic experiences of international students, credence was given to the prior expectation of international students before arriving in Turkey and whether such expectations have been met. The study also looked at the kind of relationship that exists between the Turkish scholarship secretariat (YTB) and the students. I begin with the take of respondents on the Turkish educational system.

##### **4.7.3.1.1 Turkey's educational system**

In the first place, with the exception of the language of instruction and the competitiveness of the style of teaching in Turkey relative to the system available in the respondent's home country, all variables aligned to the educational experiences of respondents were positive, hence, a positive appraisal of the Turkish educational system. However, mindful of the fact that the online survey only gave a snapshot of the real issue, there was the need to institute an interview process that addresses the questions "why" and "how".

As indicated in the "why Turkey section of the questionnaire", majority of the interviewed had the expectation of studying in a world-class university as part of their educational life in Turkey. As indicated by Moses, and shared by Lawrence and Jamila among

others, "...[the] expectation was that the universities in Turkey were world-class particularly looking at the facilities of the institutions online" (Moses). These expectations were however not met because per the take of Lawrence, the system is not designed to meet the taste of foreigners. He opined:

"I think the educational system [in Turkey] is good for the Turkish [students] and not foreigners like me. The first time I did multiple choice questions for exams was in Turkey....exams questions in my country ask about the students' understanding and not what he memorized from the lectures...."

A similar sentiment is expressed by Mubarak thus, "... there is a problem with the Turkish educational system. Here, it is all about memorizing and not interaction. This does not allow the student to be innovative and think outside the box..." Again, Amira had this to share about the Turkish educational system: "It is a kind of an [interesting] system. My idea of a university education which includes a higher layer of research was not met. It is just a lecture and exam thing. Even the exams do not include issues and questions which make the student think outside the box."

In sum, this category of students views the Turkish educational system as in the words of Jamila "...an [interesting] system because the structure of teaching and learning is not involving of students". Simply put, "it is exams based." It is therefore not surprising that, in comparison with higher education institutions in their home countries, the students do not see the teaching style in Turkey as better. In fact, students such as Moses and Jamila per their assertion see the teaching and learning style inferior compared to those that exist in their country or elsewhere. To be sure, these students are from poor countries with educational systems ranking among the middle to the bottom on a continent where few universities make it to the international rankings. Their verdict is therefore, a serious one which needs to be given the maximum attention.

These claims notwithstanding, there are other students mostly in private universities whose verdict of the Turkish educational system and teaching style stands in a positive light. Ali is one of such students and he narrates his situation as follows:

"In my opinion, it is [Turkish educational system] a good system. I think for my school... the only problem I have is that the system lays more emphasis on

attendance to lectures. It is like a high school system. But I think, as a university, students must be treated like adults....”

Similarly, Enoch makes a positive comparative case in favor of the Turkish educational system. He indicates thus;

The system is better compared to my country. You have everything in your possession, cheap internet, library among others. Generally, the facilities are good compared to my country. I am in a private university. The professors are good and I like them. My friends particularly those in the public universities complain about their Professors and their system...but I don't see this in my university.

From a different perspective, Emmanuel indicates...“taking my school into consideration, and some of the extra curriculum activities, I think the system is good. The opportunities exist and courses are available if only you want to take advantage of it.”

Putting together the narrations of the two categories of students in relation to the Turkish educational system, one thing stands out; there are issues that need to be addressed. It can be pointed out that even though the first category of students are overwhelmed by the magnitude of challenges confronting them, the second category views them as part of the journey and hence a minimal concern. But be that it may, for *Turkiye Burslari* to be competitive and by extension meet the set objectives therein in the broader Turkish foreign policy arena, the educational system must be realigned to meet the expectations that drive international students to the country. In addressing these general concerns, one specific area that requires some attention is the language of instruction which forms the subject of the next discussion.

#### **4.7.3.1.2 Language of instruction**

From the results of both the questionnaire and interviews, problem with the language of instruction is presented as the biggest challenge to international students. In fact, 109 students out of the 195 students who responded to the questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the language of instruction of their respective programs. To be sure, the data adduced from the survey shows that majority of the students (78%) had their

language of instruction in Turkish, leaving about 22% of the students studying in other languages. Emmanuel (same as above) summarized this problem in the words below;

The major challenge or issue facing us in our education is the language of instruction especially in the early years of education. You know, we were given less than one year to study the language and this is not even the technical aspect...this is stressful and depressing. Those who had courses in the language that they are familiar with will generally get less stress...I think the language has future effects on my educational prospects...I think from individual to individual, if you take the advantage and make the appropriate grades, you have an advantage going forward.

In a more frustrating tone, Amira has this to say about the language of instruction:

...My main challenge in Turkey is the language. I find it difficult communicating and expressing myself well in the language. This makes it difficult for me to position myself well in the achievement of my future academic goals. I think I am not fully equipped to face others. I think my spirit of competition has been lowered as a result of studying in the Turkish language.

In his recommendation for an improvement in the Turkish educational system, Marymart dedicated all her suggestions to the language issue: She puts it thus;

I think the Turkish educational system should include other languages of instruction such as English. Since some students are high ranked before coming, opportunities should be given to them to complete their studies early and with better grades, by studying in a field and language that they are comfortable with.

From the sentiments expressed by the students regarding their language of instruction, it is not surprising that majority of the students, 110, a number close to those who expressed dissatisfaction with the language of instruction indicated that they needed extra support in order to adjust to Turkish as a language of instruction.

Stationing this finding within the scope of the second hypothesis, it is confirmed that satisfaction with the language of instruction of one's program of study has an impact on the level of satisfaction with the educational system. The correlation analysis carried out affirmed this position too. Meaning that if the language of instruction is challenging to the student, his satisfaction with the educational system would be affected. From the table 4.7 below, it can be adduced that the Pearson correlation coefficient for satisfaction with language of instruction and satisfaction with the Turkish educational system is 0.388,

which is significant at ( $p < .001$  for a two-tailed test). Per this analysis, a positive linear relationship exists between the two variables. In addition, as indicated by the data from the interviews and online survey, this hypothesis is clearly affirmed. However, the third hypothesis which sought to measure whether a relationship exists between the number of years spent in Turkey and the satisfaction with language of instruction was not affirmed by the correlation analysis. Refer to the table below for results of the correlation analysis carried out.

Table 4.6 Correlation analysis

|   |                     | Number of years in Turkey | I am satisfied with the Turkish educational system | I am satisfied with the language of instruction for my program |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Number of years in Turkey</b>                                      | Pearson Correlation | 1                         | ,012   | ,071   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                           | ,871   | ,335   |
|   | N                   | 193                       | 185  | 188  |
| <b>I am satisfied with the Turkish educational system</b>             | Pearson Correlation | ,012                      | 1  | <b>,388**</b>  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | ,871                      |  | <b>,000</b>  |
|   | N                   | 185                       | 187  | 186  |
| <b>I am satisfied with the language of instruction for my program</b> | Pearson Correlation | ,071                      | ,388**   | 1  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | ,335                      | ,000   |  |
|   | N                   | 188                       | 186  | 190  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### **4.7.3.1.3 Relationship with YTB**

As indicated earlier, this study also examined the relationship between the students and YTB since it is adduced that a good relationship between the two would ensure a proper functioning, and a mutually beneficial system. The responses obtained from the survey and interviews in this case just like the responses on the educational system were interesting.

Foremost, results from the survey show that respondents overwhelmingly accepted the responsiveness of YTB in the provision of their needs ranging from the payment of monthly stipend to health needs among others. Beyond that, they painted a gloomy picture when it comes to other relationships with the scholarship institution. Free flow of communication between the student body and YTB is mostly non-existing. Aaron makes the case that he is even scared of the institution to the extent that he gets frightened whenever he receives a message from them. He makes the point;

“I am really scared of YTB. I have many friends who had issues with YTB and are living more than 6 months without monthly stipend. Some of them just uploaded their documents late and that was enough to cut their stipend. I don't really have any relationship with them. I pray every day not to have any issue with them. If I get a message from them, I panic before I even open it.”

A similar sentiment is shared by Mohammed who described his relationship with the institution as one of master-servant relationship;

“My relationship with them [YTB] is hard to describe. We have been remote controlled. We don't even know who brought us here, very [poor] relationship. They don't want you to express your problems to them, they just want you to follow them...Everybody is scared of the institution. I think this fear should be taken out of the students.”

Taken the process employed by the institution into account, Moses makes the case thus;

“YTB's process is wrong. It is an institution which is supposed to manage students but it acts like a robot. According to them, if your monthly stipend is suspended, you would become smarter. They only think about the money. That money is the only motivator for studying. People who work there should come from an experienced background such as those in the academia who have had connections with international students before. Those people understand the students.... If they see anything affecting the student such as 'devamsizlik kaldi (discontinuous),' they don't ask why...They take action without even explaining anything to the student involved.”

Hassan summarizes this as, despite the responsiveness of the institution in relation to the provision of the students' needs, some reservations still exist; "they shouldn't be too rigid to their already planned system. They should allow room for some level of flexibility to take account of the realities on the ground which would enable them to understand the situation of the students better." In other words, there should be better communication network between the students and YTB such that trust and confidence would be built for better tomorrow.

#### **4.7.3.2 Cultural experiences**

The cultural experience of international students is examined in terms of the level of interaction between international students and their Turkish counterparts, interactions between international students from the same country and interactions between international students from different countries. In this regard, the findings of the online survey in this domain are very instructive. All variables in this section received majority approval. Thus, the majority respondents agreed with the statements captured in this section. Juxtaposing this to the findings of the interviews, the same trend can be identified albeit with more details regarding why. This is summed up in the words of Yunus;

"The Turkish culture is an interesting one. It reflects different cultures, very diverse. You can see a mixture of Arab, Persian, and European cultures. If you look at the countries in the Middle East, Turkey and maybe Syria before the war are secular. This gives you an idea of how a predominantly Islamic country of secular nature is."

From the perspective of interaction with the Turkish people, Abdul Muaz has this to say; 'the Turkish culture is a good one. The people are generally not racist. The food and the religious aspects are good. I am happy about the people'. In the same vein, Mary described the Turkish students and the Turkish people in general as "hospitable and helpful".

Despite these positive assessments, there are others who had some reservations to share about the Turkish culture. Capturing some of these reservations, Islam opines that "the Turkish culture is beautiful but it is conservative for me as a foreign student. If you come from Africa particularly, they think you are hungry and that you don't even have any



school in your country. You only have an opportunity to work with a Turkish company only if they have a project to execute in your country.” Similarly, Issah, described the Turkish way of life as”...lacking sincerity, they do not practice what they preach.”

Be that it may, even the critics are not oblivious of the beauty of the Turkish culture and the people. For people like Moree, the Turkish culture is “...beautiful, mixed and diverse and [would welcome] the opportunity to learn more about it”. Indeed, this seems to be the position of majority of the respondents as indicated by the data from the survey. An overwhelming majority of about 138 students representing 72% of the surveyed group expressed a desire to learn more about the Turkish culture if granted the opportunity. This can be said to be one of the achievements of the *Turkiye Burslari*. Thus, it has contributed in diffusing the Turkish culture by bringing it close to the doorstep of persons who would have hitherto not had the opportunity to do so.

In sum, despite the many challenges that international students pointed out as characteristic of their academic and cultural experiences in Turkey, on the whole, majority 115 students out of the 195 surveyed indicated that their experience is either good or very good. This squares up with their readiness to recommend the country and its systems to others. From the survey, 65% of the students indicated that they would recommend Turkey to others. But as the survey limited this recommendation to the educational sector, the interviews extended it to other sectors such as trade and tourism, among others.

While students such as Moree, Ayisha, Malik, Emmanuel and others linked their recommendations to the economic sector of the country particularly trade and tourism, others like Hassan, Mubarak Hamza and Hamid indicated a willingness to recommend the educational system of the country to others, but only if reforms that allows for more programs to be instructed in international languages such as English and French and a reform of the YTB to allow for some flexibility when it comes to the selection of courses and programs of study is undertaken.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

In an increasingly competitive global platform, the exploitation of various strategies has become necessary in order to grant states a comparative advantage in their engagements with other states and external entities. The end of the cold war which ushered in a new global framework that enabled states to design their individual foreign policy agenda without casting it in the shadows of bipolarity contributed significantly to this new development. The result is that states now have more freedom than ever before to take and implement their preferred foreign policy agenda devoid of any serious challenges and interference. This study emerges from this new framework and stations itself to examine one of the tools (education) that has gain currency in the foreign policy design of states in the wake of the new international framework.

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study emerged to examine the role of higher education scholarship as one of the tools that governments the world over have resorted to in order to win a comparative edge over their counterparts in the global engagements. Of particular concern to the study is an assessment of the academic and cultural experiences of international students by which the

study examined the relevance of the tool of higher education scholarship in the entire dimension of the foreign policy device of the Turkish Government. The study covered only the main Turkish government scholarship scheme namely *Turkiye Burslari*. In this regard, respondents to the online survey and interviewees carried out were sampled from among the beneficiary students of *Turkiye Burslari*. In all, 195 students cutting across 16 provinces in Turkey and spanning 64 countries across the globe took part in the survey and interviews. The study also involved analysis of speeches of officials of *Turkiye Burslari* and political leaders of Turkey who matter in the foreign policy landscape of the country.

The conviction surrounding this undertaking stems from the belief that through the provision of higher education scholarship, the Turkish government has been able to further the reach of the Turkish culture across the globe. It has been able to create a web of secondary Turkish citizens in other countries that it can rely on in the promotion of Turkey's interest in the further. Owing to this, the study sets to understand how this tool finds expression in the specific case of Turkey's soft power and by extension the general framework of Turkish foreign policy.

It is instructive to note that the provision of higher education scholarship has a central position in the new Turkish foreign design, particularly its soft power dimension. The enthusiasm with which the government undertakes to expand the program and increase investment accordingly points to this reality. Important actors in the Turkish foreign policy arena miss no opportunity in pointing out this in their engagement with other governments. This is borne out of the potential that the Turkish government acknowledges schemes like this hold for the socioeconomic well-being of the country going forward and its subsequent competitiveness in global politics.

From the perspective of the beneficiaries, it is clear that through the scholarship schemes, many of the respondents have been granted the opportunity to get themselves acquainted with the Turkish way of life. Indeed, the response of the student with regards to their willingness to recommend the country to others in all spheres stands as a positive achievement of the scheme. What this means is that a global advertisement platform has been gifted to the Turkish Republic through this scheme which would drive the image of the country through miles and across borders. What makes this more potent is the fact that

an enthusiasm about the Turkish culture has been generated, which is highlighted in the desire of the students to learn more about the Turkish culture. The benefit is that many more young people now aside from the traditionally established systems in the West wants to study in Turkey. This is evidenced by the 2016 figures of applications to *Turkiye Burslari* which stood at 122,000 applications from 161 countries (*Turkiye Burslari*, 2017).

In addition, one significant issue the study brought to the fore is a debate regarding whether the provision of scholarship packages only is enough to attract the needed talented international students into the jurisdiction of a country for higher education. In other words, what factors are significant in driving the competitiveness of a higher education scholarship scheme? As indicated in the data adduced from the survey, perception of the existence of world-class universities coupled with a perception that attaining a university degree from a country abroad increases the future employment prospects of an individual are the overarching factors that attract international students. In the absence of these, the mere provision of educational scholarship would render the choice of a country for higher education to be placed in the domain of a last resort. These perceptions should also reflect the reality. However, in the Turkish case, the reality is not as perceived by the students.

The primary concern the surveyed students highlighted is the problem with the language of instruction. Indeed, per the second hypothesis constructed for the study, satisfaction with the language of instruction has serious ramification for the level of satisfaction with the Turkish educational system. In other words, if the students are dissatisfied with the language of instruction, their appraisal of the Turkish educational system would be low and hence the extent to which they would be willing to recommend the system to others.

The style of teaching and learning also cropped up as one of the areas of concern for international students. This concern becomes more serious given the fact that it is cast in a comparative setting. Note that one of the overarching factors that stand to attract students is the perception of coming to study in a world-class university. Therefore, if students begin to view the Turkish system as not any better from the system that exists in their individual countries, the efficacy of the program would be affected. Likely for Turkey, it is favored by most of the students when it comes to the facilities for teaching and learning, hence an advantage they can build on.

In sum, the results from the study affirm the general hypothesis thus; the provision of higher education scholarship is a potent tool for the advancement of the Turkish soft power policy and hence the attainment of the overall Turkish foreign policy objectives. It also indicates that much work needs to be done in order to improve the competitiveness of *Turkiye Burslari* relative to others on the globe particularly given the fact that majority of the students either want to run back home or go to another country upon completion of their studies.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

It could be concluded from this work that *Turkiye Burslari* plays a significant role in the projection of Turkish soft power and by extension in the attainment of the larger foreign policy objectives of the country. It is a critical player in the production of a “Trojan horse” (Tremblay, 2010, p.117) for the rebranding of the Turkish image and making it more attractive in the global arena beyond its immediate neighbors. In this regard, it is, therefore, important and necessary to look into the problems that confront the scheme in order to tap its full potential and productivity.

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are therefore made:

- There should be a comprehensive reform of the Turkish educational system to square it up with world standards. This would ensure the production of a positive image of the Turkish educational system among international students and hence the competitiveness of the system in relation to others. Generally, efforts must be directed at moving the system away from the ‘memorization and reproduction’ fashion to one that is more inclusive of the student in both the classroom setting and outside.
- Related to the first recommendation, the Turkish educational system should involve more international languages particularly English and French. The language of instruction of the programs should not be imposed on students. In fact, the scheme can draw from the Norwegian system where studies in the Norwegian language are reserved for students who have demonstrated excellence in the usage of the language in an academic setting.

- There should also be efforts directed at improving the relationship between YTB and the beneficiaries of Turkiye Burslari. In fact, the relationship between the two entities should move beyond the narrow spectrum of ‘money relationship’ to a relationship built on a strong and easy flow of communication. For instance, a common platform involving a country representative of the students and YTB can be created to facilitate understanding and communication.
- Another issue that respondents pointed out was the issue of the quality of accommodation in Turkey. Even though, respondents indicated their general satisfaction with the accommodation arrangement by YTB, others especially masters and doctorate students were not. It is, therefore, recommended that the accommodation arrangement put in place by YTB is made flexible, granting students the opportunity to decide whether to stay in the dormitories or outside.
- Related to the above is the issue relating to the allowance paid to beneficiaries. In place of a monthly allowance system, an annual allowance system could be instituted to take care of the basic needs of beneficiaries.
- There should also be the establishment of a common platform for alumnus of Turkiye Burslari, This platform should be used as an ambassadorial platform of YTB. Indeed, the platform should be linked with the current beneficiaries of the scheme for the purposes of sharing experiences, among others.
- It also came to light that the Turkish public have very little information and appreciation of the benefits of such schemes to the country. This has a tendency of pitching beneficiaries against the public who view such a policy as a waste of taxpayer’s resources. This could serve as a hindrance to the progress of the scheme. It is, therefore, recommended that a vigorous public education program is instituted by utilizing the local representatives of the people. This would provide the scheme a sense of transparency and accountability.
- As part of building the practical skills of beneficiaries, it is recommended that beneficiaries are granted some hours of working permit. Masters and doctorate students should be attached to research and teaching assistant positions in their respective schools. This would build their theoretical knowledge in the practical realm.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The dawn of the twenty first century has introduced a dimension of power competition that draws more on the capacities of states to influence others through means other than ‘gun boot’. Indeed, the era where state power is measured in terms of hardcore military ancillaries is gradually given way to a mixed system tilting the debate in favor of soft power. This study points out that the provision of higher education scholarship is one of the tools that states have adopted in promoting and acquiring competitive edge over their counterparts in the recent power struggle.

Aside being a modicum of public diplomacy through universities and academia, research has shown that the educational sector and its internationalization have significant benefits for the economy of nations. According to the Institute of International Education in the US, in the year 2010, the contribution of international students to the U.S. economy stood at about \$21.2 billion (Institute of International Education 2011, Open Door Fast Facts). Similar facts emerge when one looks at the UK and Australian systems. Indeed, Francisco Sanchez of the US commerce department is reported as saying that “higher education is among the country’s top 10 service exports, right between environmental services and safety and security” (Sanchez, 2011).

In addition, this study has shown that the establishment of higher education scholarship is one step towards the development of a country into a commercial center for education thereby enhancing the soft power of the country. It plays a significant role in terms of diffusing the cultural values of the state and developing a pool of intellectuals who the state can rely on as it moves to build and strengthen relationships with governments across the globe. As the international community becomes acquainted with the quality of the system available, an attractive environment for expenditure in education is created. This provides a further diffusion channel of the culture and norm system of the state to the outside world. This means that the enhancement of the soft power dimension that higher education scholarship provides has a potential to shape and strengthen the hard power dimension of state power. It is in this light that the challenges facing Turkiye Burslari as identified by the beneficiaries should be given the needed attention if the government of Turkey wants to reap the full returns of the investment made in this sector.

Furthermore, as the literature indicated, higher education scholarship is just one of the tools employed by governments globally to project and enhance their soft power. Also, higher education scholarship does not exist independently of the other soft power tools. It serves to complement them. It can therefore be underscored that problems associated with any of the tools have the tendency of affecting the viability of the others. In the Turkish case, the confrontations that visited the implementation of Turkey's humanitarian assistance programs need to be seriously given a second look. For example, in the Somalian case as identified by Yukleyen and Mohammed (2015), the Turkish government is accused of using its humanitarian assistance programs to meddle in local politics. This has the tendency of breeding resistance in relation to the implementation of other soft power tools such as *Turkiye Burslari*.

Finally, the conduct of this study has opened up certain gaps which subsequent studies can aspire to fill. In particular, a gap in literature based on measuring the economic value of such schemes in details has been identified by this study. Clearly, this is a critical area for public policy experts and practitioners. In addition, a case is made for a comparative study to be done in this area. In other words, a comparative study can be done pitching the *Turkiye Burslari* against other scholarship schemes such as that of the Russian government or Erasmus Mundus to unearth the nuances, dynamics and system of operation among others. Finally, as this study relied solely on *Turkiye Burslari* practically because of the shared numbers and the attention that it has received from the political circles, other government institutional scholarship schemes such as Tubitak, Diyanet scholarship and the likes can be studied together with *Turkiye Burslari* as a way of examining a holistic picture of the role of higher education scholarship in Turkish foreign policy.



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## Appendix A

### QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed as a tool for the gathering of data on a research on how the Turkish Government employs Higher education scholarship to promote its Soft power. Your inputs in this regard would be highly appreciated. Please note that the information you provide is restricted to only an academic usage and does not expose you to any risk whatsoever. Besides, the research omits any sensitive information about you. Thank you

#### SECTION I Demographical information

| S/N | QUESTION       | CHOICES  |
|-----|----------------|--|
| 1.  | Gender         | I. Male [ ]<br>II. Female [ ]<br>III. Other [ ]                                |
| 2.  | Age            | I. 15-18 [ ]<br>II. 19-24 [ ]<br>III. 25-30 [ ]<br>IV. 31- above [ ]           |
| 3.  | Religion       | I. Islam [ ]<br>II. Christianity [ ]<br>III. Other [ ]                         |
| 4.  | Level of Study | I. Undergraduate [ ]<br>II. Masters [ ]<br>III. Doctorate [ ]<br>IV. Other [ ] |

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 5. | Program                                   | ( )   |
| 6. | Language of Instruction of your programme | I. Arabic<br>II. English<br>III. French<br>IV. German<br>V. Turkish<br>VI. Other          |
| 7. | Country of Origin                         | (.....)   |
| 8. | Number of years in Turkey                 | I. 0-1 [ ]<br>II. 1-2 [ ]<br>III. 2-3 [ ]<br>IV. 3-4 [ ]<br>V. 4-5 [ ]<br>VI. 5 and above |
| 9. | City of residence in Turkey               | (.....)   |

**SECTION II WHY TURKEY**

**Please tell us the extent to which the following factors influence your choice of Turkey as an education destination.**

**Do this by circling the number that corresponds to your choice.**

| S/N | STATEMENT           | 1<br>Not at all<br>important | 2<br>Unimportant | 3<br>Neutral | 4<br>Important | 5<br>Very<br>important |
|-----|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 10. | To study in a world | 1                            | 2                | 3            | 4              | 5                      |

|            |   |          |          |          |          |          |
|------------|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|            | class university  |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>11.</b> | To enhance my employability prospects                             | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>13.</b> | The Location of Turkey in Europe                                  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>14.</b> | To take a specific course not available home                      | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>15</b>  | It is difficult to get a place in a university in my home country | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>16</b>  | Cost effectiveness (cheaper than home)                            | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>17.</b> | Encouragement from Family and friends                             | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |

### SECTION III EXPERIENCES

#### a) Academic Experience

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below in relation to your academic experiences in Turkey as an international student.

Please circle the number that corresponds to your answer

| S/N        | Statement   | <b>1</b><br>Strongly<br>Disagree | <b>2</b><br>Disagree | <b>3</b><br>Neither | <b>4</b><br>Agree | <b>5</b><br>Strongly<br>Agree |
|------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>18.</b> | My course or program is interesting and stimulating | <b>1</b>                         | <b>2</b>             | <b>3</b>            | <b>4</b>          | <b>5</b>                      |
| <b>19.</b> | I am satisfied with the range of modules that I     | <b>1</b>                         | <b>2</b>             | <b>3</b>            | <b>4</b>          | <b>5</b>                      |

|            |  |          |          |          |          |          |
|------------|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|            | can study for my course/program                                    |          |          |          |          |          |
| <b>20.</b> | What is taught relates to the real world                           | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>21.</b> | I feel my course/program is preparing me well for my chosen career | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>22.</b> | I am satisfied with the language of instruction of my program      | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>23.</b> | I need more support for the language of instruction                | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>24.</b> | The style of teaching in Turkey is better than in my home country  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>25.</b> | I am satisfied with the Turkish educational system                 | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>26.</b> | The scholarship institution is very responsive to our needs.       | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>27.</b> | I would recommend Turkey to others                                 | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> |

**b) Cultural Experiences**

**Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your cultural experience in Turkey as an international student.**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Statements</b>   | <b>1<br/>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>2<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>3<br/>Neither</b> | <b>4<br/>Agree</b> | <b>5<br/>Strongly<br/>agree</b> |
|------------|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>28.</b> | I would like to mix more with Turkish students                      | <b>1</b>                           | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>             | <b>4</b>           | <b>5</b>                        |
| <b>29.</b> | I would like to mix more with students from different nationalities | <b>1</b>                           | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>             | <b>4</b>           | <b>5</b>                        |
| <b>30.</b> | I prefer to make friends with fellow students from my home country  | <b>1</b>                           | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>             | <b>4</b>           | <b>5</b>                        |
| <b>31.</b> | I would like to learn more about Turkish culture                    | <b>1</b>                           | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>             | <b>4</b>           | <b>5</b>                        |
| <b>32.</b> | I am satisfied with the quality of accommodation in Turkey          | <b>1</b>                           | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>             | <b>4</b>           | <b>5</b>                        |
| <b>33.</b> | I prefer to live with people from my home country                   | <b>1</b>                           | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>             | <b>4</b>           | <b>5</b>                        |

**34. Overall, how do you rate your experience in Turkey as an international student?**

- I. Very good [ ]
- II. Good [ ]
- III. Average [ ]
- IV. Poor [ ]
- V. Very poor [ ]

**35. What is your plan after graduating?**

- I. To seek employment in Turkey [ ]
- II. Seek permanent residence in Turkey [ ]
- III. Further studies in Turkey [ ]
- IV. Go to another country [ ]
- V. Go back home [ ]
- VI. Other [ ]

**Thank you for your participation.**