

# The Opinions regarding the Program of the Students Going Abroad in the Scope of the Erasmus+ Exchange Program \*

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**Abstract:** The present research aims to examine the opinions of Erasmus+ exchange program students going abroad with the program as part of their experiences. Descriptive phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in this study. Thus, open-ended opinion forms, which were answered by 14 students who went abroad in the 2016-2017 academic years with the Erasmus+ exchange program were analyzed by content analysis. The data obtained from the participants were handled under three themes: *information acquisition and application; overseas process; contribution, expectation and suggestion*. The findings obtained in this study suggest that it is important for the coordinators to keep the interaction with the students at the highest level to run the program in a healthier way. Besides, it is recommended that informative meetings are held at universities about exchange programs for students and that the peers participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program are given a voice in the meetings.

**Keywords:** Erasmus+ program, internationalization, mobility in higher education

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## Introduction

Internationalization in higher education has become a means of achieving adequate levels of intercultural competence and effectiveness for both academic staff and students. Living and learning experience in a different cultural, political and economic environment enables students to gain experiences in other countries and prepare them better for their future careers (Marcotte, Desroches & Poupart, 2007). Bologna process that involved the 47 countries along with Turkey is a reform process aimed to create a European Higher Education Area within the scope of internationalization. One of the main objectives of this reform movement is *"to ensure and popularize the mobility of students and lecturers"* (Council of Higher Education [CoHE], 2017). Erasmus+ exchange program, one of the programs that provide this mobility, is defined as an important catalyst for the interest of students and faculty members to international mobility (Jacobone & Moro, 2015).

After several years of a pilot phase as part of student exchange, the Erasmus exchange program was proposed by the European Commission in 1986 and launched in June 1987. In the following years, the program has constantly changed and developed. The Erasmus exchange program, which was included in the Socrates program in 1995, along with many other educational programs, has been part of the Lifelong Learning Program since 2007 (Vossensteyn, Beerkens, Cremonini, Besançon, Focken, Leurs & De Wit, 2010). Considering the aim of lifelong learning to be open to and adapt to social, cultural and technological innovations regardless of time and place, the potential benefits of the Erasmus+ exchange program in the sight of students and society cannot be ignored.

The Erasmus exchange program started in 1987 and was one of the first initiatives to implement the foundations of the European Higher Education Area and lie at the heart of the Bologna Process (González, Mesanza & Mariel, 2011). In addition to preparing European students to work in an increasingly transnational economy, the Erasmus exchange program has also been promoted by the European Commission as a "civil" exercise aimed at "building a European consciousness" from the outset (Papatsiba, 2006 cited in Mitchell, 2012). It can be interpreted that the Erasmus+ exchange program has accelerated the realization of the purpose of creating a European Higher Education Area within the Bologna process. It is stated that the students and academics participation in the Erasmus exchange program has carried out in Turkey since 2004 (Eurydice, 2010 cited in Saglam, Ozudogru & Ciray, 2011).

Erasmus+ exchange program enables university students to benefit from opportunities in the field of education, research, art and culture in another university and breathe the atmosphere in the university (Ortas, 2008). In addition, the Erasmus+ exchange program helps students introduce themselves to another European country and its culture. Likewise, it paves the way for them to improve their foreign language skills, especially their proficiency in the host country's language (Sigalas, 2009). A study conducted by Jacobone and Moro (2015) reveals that the values that students

participating in the Erasmus+ program have the highest as the output of the program are cultural development, personal development and the development of language skills in the country of destination. In this respect, it is seen that the Erasmus+ exchange program contributes to students in social, cultural and academic dimensions.

The Erasmus+ exchange program is seen as a successful practice in a study in the European countries and learning different European languages (Teichler, 1996). In this context, the traces left by the Erasmus+ exchange program on students are important. Positive and negative student opinions about the program are a kind of feedback to the coordination units about the program at universities.

In the literature, there are studies on various aspects of the Erasmus+ exchange program. These studies include the studies dealing with students' level of satisfaction with the program (Yagci, Ekinci, Burgaz, Kelecioğlu & Ergene, 2007), student awareness and attitudes towards the program (Saban, Cenberci & Cenberci, 2019), the effects of the program on students (Onder & Balci, 2010), students' views on classroom management in the country they went (Boyaci, 2011), evaluating the program concerning dialogue and interaction in cultural dimensions (Demir & Demir, 2009), and problems faced by students in the process (Ersoy, 2013).

In addition to quantitative research, there are also qualitative studies on this subject. There are studies that address the problems experienced by students and problem-solving methods in the Erasmus exchange program (Acikgoz, Catikoglu, Hephep & Karaca, 2020; Cepni, Aydin & Kilinc, 2018; Yagci, Cetin & Turhan, 2013). There are studies that examine the views of students participating in the program on the basis of a university sample (Adanir & Susam, 2019; Ozdem, 2013). Duman (2020) limited his study in the context of the Erasmus+ experiences of the Guidance and Psychological Counseling students. Özkan and Mutdogan (2018) focused on the contributions of the program to students in their studies, in which they adopted a qualitative approach. Another study comparatively examined the views about the program of Turkish and foreign students participating in the Erasmus program (Saritas, 2011). Adigüzel (2013) examined the students participating in the Erasmus exchange views on youth policy in Turkey. In addition to the mentioned studies, there are also studies examining the views of faculty members regarding the Erasmus+ exchange program in various contexts (Dincer, Aslan & Bayraktar, 2017; Kasalak, 2013; Kayalar, 2015; Kis & Konan, 2012; Usta, Demirtas & Demir, 2013; Unal, 2016).

The feature that distinguishes this research from previous studies is that the Erasmus+ exchange program has been handled as a holistic process and students' opinions have been consulted accordingly with a qualitative approach. The present study aimed to examine the Erasmus+ exchange program from the application process to the completion of the program in line with the students' views. As a result of this research, we aimed to reveal in detail what the program means for the students, what the program contributed to the students and the services considered inadequate in the program. Thus, this study is expected to reveal important findings in the context of achieving the goal of the Erasmus+ exchange program as a process. In addition, it is

predicted that the students' views on their experiences will be a guide for students who are considering participating in the program.

In this study, which is handled with a qualitative approach, we aim to discuss in detail the positive and negative opinions of the students who have gone abroad with the Erasmus+ exchange program, with their experiences within the scope of the program process. For this purpose, the sub-problems of the research below are as follows:

1. How and why did the students decide to apply for the Erasmus+ exchange program?
2. What are the difficulties students experience during their time abroad?
3. What are the opportunities provided to students in the process?
4. What are the contributions of the Erasmus+ exchange program to students?
5. What are the students' suggestions to other students who want to participate in this program?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in this study. Phenomenology research focuses on the experiences of individuals. The phenomenology pattern, which aims to reveal the perceptions and experiences of individuals from their own perspectives (Ersoy, 2017), aims to reveal how people make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2013). Descriptive phenomenology, a type of phenomenology, aims to describe people's perceptions and experiences (Ersoy, 2017). In this research, it is aimed that the students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program reveal their experiences in this process and reflect them with their own expressions.

### **Participants**

In this study, criterion sampling and convenience sampling were used together. Criterion sampling requires the sample to have predetermined characteristics and qualities within the framework of the problem situation of the study (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2017). The basic criterion in the study is that the participants were undergraduate students who studied at a university abroad for at least one semester within the scope of the Erasmus+ exchange program in the last year. To bring speed and practicality to the study (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018), convenience sampling was also used. Thus, in accordance with the criteria, 47 students who went abroad for one or two semesters in the 2016-2017 academic years within the scope of

the Erasmus+ exchange program through Kirikkale University Coordination Office of Foreign Relations were tried to be reached via their e-mail addresses and 14 students answered. As a result, the participants of this study consisted of 14 students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic Information of Participants*

Participant	Gender	Age	Department	Erasmus Country
P1	Female	22	Law	Italy
P2	Male	22	Mechanical Engineering	Czech Republic
P3	Female	22	International Relations	Poland
P4	Male	24	French Translation and Interpreting	France
P5	Male	21	Sports Management	Portugal
P6	Female	24	Political Science and Public Administration	Czech Republic
P7	Female	21	Guidance and Psychological Counseling	Macedonia
P8	Female	23	Law	Poland
P9	Male	22	Guidance and Psychological Counseling	Poland
P10	Female	23	Political Science and Public Administration	Czech Republic
P11	Female	24	Political Science and Public Administration	Poland
P12	Male	24	Arabic Translation and Interpreting	Poland
P13	Female	23	International Relations	Poland
P14	Male	30	Music	Hungary

The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 30, with eight women and six men. All of the participants were included in this program while continuing their undergraduate studies in various faculties and departments. The countries Erasmus+ students went included Czech Republic, France, Italy, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal and Hungary.

### Data Collection Tool and Process

During the process of collecting research data, an open-ended interview form was created as a result of the literature review by the researchers. The form was finalized as a result of the examination of the interview form by two experts in the field of educational sciences. As a result of obtaining the necessary permissions from Kirikkale University Coordination Office of Foreign Relations, the interview form was sent to the e-mail addresses of 47 students who participated in the Erasmus+ exchange program in 2016 - 2017 academic years, and 14 students sent their answers using e-mail.

### Validity and Reliability

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) adapted the principles of validity and reliability, which were conceptualized by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) and should be found in a scientific study, into the quantitative and qualitative research context. Thus, validity is considered as credibility and transferability, and reliability is considered as consistency

and confirmability in qualitative research. In this study, in which a qualitative approach was adopted, various validity and reliability methods were used.

In this study, firstly, the data collection and analysis process was discussed in detail for validity and reliability. The open-ended interview form was examined by experts in educational sciences and the interview form was finalized in line with expert opinions. Besides, some of the students' opinions were presented with direct quotations. In addition, a consensus was considered in coding the data. Coding was performed separately by the researchers and themes were determined based on the consensus after coding. After determining the themes, the determined codes were grouped under separate themes by the researchers. Afterwards, formula of Reliability =  $\text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement}) \times 100$  (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used and 84% consensus was achieved. The codes of disagreement have been discussed by the researchers and included under themes.

## Data Analysis

Content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis methods, was used in the analysis of the research data. Content analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that reveals the codes hidden within the data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). According to Yildirim and Simsek (2018), qualitative data analysis consists of four basic steps: coding data, finding themes, organizing codes and themes, and interpreting the findings. These processes were followed in this study as well. In the analysis process, firstly, analyses were made for open-ended opinion forms. After the analysis, codes were created separately by the researchers in line with the students' answers. In the next stage, a theme determination study was conducted by the researchers. The themes were organized by making a common evaluation for the obtained themes, and the determined codes were grouped according to these themes. In this context, some students' views were shared with their own sentences to make the findings clear and more understandable.

## Findings

In this section, the data obtained from the participants in line with the Erasmus+ exchange program experience are discussed under three salient themes as *information acquisition and application process*, *overseas process*, *contribution, expectation and suggestion*, as shown in Figure 1. The topics covered in the *information acquisition and application process* were how students were aware of the Erasmus+ exchange program, why and how they decided to participate in this program and the difficulties and problems students experienced during the application process. In the *overseas process* section, the findings about the difficulties experienced by the students during their stay abroad and the opportunities students were provided were presented in detail. The topics presented in the *contribution, expectation and suggestion* section are how the Erasmus+ exchange program contributes to the students in academic and social

dimensions, what are the general expectations of the students about the program and the suggestions for the students who want to participate in this program.

**Figure 1.**

*Themes of Students' Experience in the Erasmus+ Exchange Program*



### **Information Acquisition and Application Process**

When the channels of students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program to obtain information about this program were examined, it was seen that the students - learned about this program through the Internet and social media by starting to research with a sense of curiosity. In addition, the students stated that they were aware of the Erasmus+ exchange program, especially with the billboard announcements and posters they frequently encountered during the application period, the advice of the faculty members and the information they obtained from their peers who participated in the Erasmus+ exchange program before. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

I have become aware of the program with my own search. P1; I learned it from posters on billboards and from friends who have gone before. P2; I became aware of the Erasmus exchange program, first thanks to my internet search and then the advice and words of my faculty members. P4; I learned from my friends who participated in the Erasmus program before. P6; I discovered Erasmus as a result of looking at programs such as Double Major, Erasmus and Mevlana on the website. P10.

University students have stated that they want to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange program for many different reasons. The main reason is that students who express that they are open to innovation want to gain experience abroad with a sense of curiosity. The university students who think that they can develop themselves socially and academically abroad stated that they applied to this exchange program for various purposes, such as learning a new foreign language or improving their foreign

language, making new friends, getting to know different cultures, and making historical and touristic trips. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

... I decided to participate in the program due to the contribution of learning a language by getting to know a culture both in my education and social life. P1; ... with my curiosity about the lives of different cultures and my desire to live abroad, I decided to participate in Erasmus. P2; I decided to apply to this program in which I thought I could improve myself in different ways. P7; I decided to join the Erasmus Student Exchange Program to improve my English. P8.

Some of the students who applied to participate in the program and were eligible to participate stated that they did not have too much difficulty during the application process with the assistance of the Erasmus+ Coordinatorship. However, some students stated that they faced various difficulties. According to the students, the most important difficulties they faced were due to the long and difficult application period. If the Erasmus+ Coordinatorships had not provided the necessary assistance and act irrelevant during the application process, observed that students would have had several difficulties, such as taking a visa, preparing the course protocol, preparing the necessary documents on time and communicating with the other university. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

... our inexperience and lack of knowledge caused me a lot of panic and expense, as we handle (almost) all correspondence with the school ourselves. P2; The procedures after it became clear that I won Erasmus were quite time-consuming and tiring. P3; It was taking a long time to get in touch with the school we were going to attend due to the intensity and details while preparing the documents. P6; The paper chase took an incredibly long time; a constant rush and you just have to do everything yourself. P11; I could not get the necessary documents from the university in Poland, I could not prepare my documents for a long time, so my transactions were delayed, we did not even get a list of which courses the department teaches. P12

### **Overseas Process**

The difficulties experienced by students going abroad within the scope of the Erasmus+ exchange program have been addressed in social, academic and accommodation - transportation dimensions. When the social difficulties experienced by the students were examined, they stated that they were alone, especially in the first months and they had difficulty in making friends due to their lack of foreign language. In addition, the students stated that they had difficulties due to cultural (e.g., lifestyle, religion and traditions) differences and even this difficulty reached the dimension of social exclusion and racism in some cases. Two of the students who talked about such difficulties are those who went to Poland and the others to Italy, France, Portugal, Czech Republic and Hungary. Apart from these difficulties, the findings revealed that students did not have any difficulties in accommodation and transportation. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

Italians do not want to be friends with strangers; they are limited to greeting and asking for well. P1; Sometimes I had difficulty in getting along with some of my friends who don't speak languages... P4; I had some difficulties due to the cultural and behavioral differences gap

between. P5; I was insulted 3 times in the market by a person because we are Muslim. For this reason, I went to the market for a while in a hesitating way. P6; Because the city I went to was small and the number of Turks was high, there was an obvious Turkish racism. P8; ... I was exposed to people's bad glances... in short, the biggest problem a Turkish Erasmus student can experience in Poland is racism. P12; ...You just miss the food. P14

Considering the academic difficulties experienced by students at their universities abroad, it was clearly seen that the main difficulties stemmed from the lack of foreign languages. It became challenging for students who found themselves insufficient in foreign languages to follow the lessons and they were not successful in the exams. In addition, some students experienced problems due to the difference between the curriculum in Turkey and abroad. The fact that the faculty members in some universities abroad did not provide academic convenience to the students who came under the Erasmus+ exchange program showed that they triggered problems. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

The school not only did not require Italian language proficiency but when we got there, it insulted us because we did not speak Italian. Our Learning Agreement forms are not signed. The school's Erasmus coordinator gave us a lot of problems. P1; Since I am enrolled in the linguistics department there, some courses seemed quite unfamiliar to me and there were courses that I could not pass. P5; As the lessons, there were irrelevant to our course in Turkey, at first, I had a hard time adapting. P6; The faculty members there did not show much tolerance. P7

When the opportunities offered to students participating in the exchange program were examined, it was stated by the students that some universities abroad organize social-cultural activities for students coming within the scope of Erasmus+, Coordinatorships helped and provided support in many issues, and students were provided with scholarships and accommodation opportunities. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

Social-cultural activities for Erasmus students were organized by the Technical University of Ostrava (VSB-TUO) with facilities and utilities. P2; The opportunities offered by our Erasmus school were the activities and trips it organized. P6; There are many events at my university in Poland and we were definitely asked to attend. P11; ... just as there are in Turkey in the dorms, dorm opportunity was presented and most importantly the financial means. Grants are very beneficial financially. P13

## **Contribution, Expectation and Suggestion**

The contributions of the Erasmus+ exchange program on students were examined in two dimensions: socially and academically. In the social dimension, it was clearly seen that it had many contributions to students. First of all, the students stated that their self-confidence increased with the experience of living alone in another country. This has also supported their entrepreneurial and extrovert character. The students who lived abroad for a certain period of time made new friendships, made historical and touristic trips, and had the opportunity to get to know different cultures. This situation caused important changes in their perspective on life and the future. The students stated that

they had a broad perspective and that living with people with individual differences broadened their horizons. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

My view of life changed after my return. Even though religions, languages, nations are different among people, I saw that it is possible to share, laugh and have fun together. This experience is priceless. P1; The friendships and experiences I gained during Erasmus expanded my perspective towards social life and my expectations from the moment I returned to the country. P2; We had the opportunity to gain an external identity, make friends and get to know different lives and cultures. P6; Now, I believe that I can travel the world alone and meet many people. It is also a very good program in terms of seeing different languages, people and cultures. P7; I've met different people in at least ten countries whom I can easily call and ask for help and be a guest or I can guest in Turkey. P8; In addition to being a more positive person, it enabled me to have a more sociable and confident character. P10; ... the biggest contribution was I improved my language, made many friends, visited 11 countries in total. P12; Most importantly, I realized that the inaccessible places were actually within a plane distance. P13

When the academic contributions of the exchange program on students are examined, it is easier for students who learn a new foreign language or develop a foreign language to access foreign resources. In addition, it was determined that students in a different education system and the environment started to look at the future and their careers from a different perspective as their academic awareness increased. Besides, students who met with different academicians in their fields and took courses had the opportunity to follow the recent developments in their fields. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

I am planning a graduate education in Italy and I think it will contribute. P1; Since my English has improved, I have the opportunity to get and perceive academic publications and information from primary sources by speaking and reading more fluently. P2; I have improved my language quite academically. P4; Having master's and doctorate degrees and motivating me by opening up the horizon that these can be done abroad ... P5; It changed my academic perspective as I took courses on international subjects. P9

When the students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program were asked for their advice to their peers who wanted to participate in this program, they advised their peers to conduct research on the country and university they would go to and go abroad with sufficient knowledge. The students recommended that they went to their peers with language training in advance not to have any language difficulties, live life fully in the countries they go to, and participate in all kinds of social activities. They also encourage the peers to decide to participate without hesitation in this program, which is seen as a good experience. At this point, some students' direct statements are as follows:

They should not miss this opportunity offered by the university. P3; Do not hesitate to go, they will not regret it... before they go, they can do a little research about the university and city they will go to. ... Let them benefit from social trips and enjoy Erasmus as much as possible. P4; ... I suggest them get detailed information about the place to stay before they go, travel a lot and make foreign friends. P6; Improving themselves in terms of language before they go will enable them to benefit from the program better and contribute to them to communicate more easily and benefit from the lessons. P9; I recommend them to save some money before you go. When he is gone, everything will be better than he expected. P14

## Discussion and Conclusion

The Erasmus exchange program, initiated by the European Commission in 1987, has played a crucial role in popularizing short-term student mobility in Europe, and since 2007, decisions have been taken to further expand this support program (Rivza & Teichler, 2007). Undoubtedly, the Erasmus+ exchange program contributes to the development of students socially and academically. At this point, the decisions to be taken and the policies to be implemented by the authorized bodies play a role in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. This study aimed to reveal the experiences of the students in the program process in line with the opinions of the students who gained experience with the program. For this purpose, data were collected from 14 students participating in the program using open-ended interview forms. The collected data were coded with content analysis and the determined codes were discussed under three salient themes: *Information acquisition and application process; overseas process; contribution, expectation and suggestion*. In this section, the results of the research are interpreted and suggestions are made for a healthier execution of the program.

This research reveals the positive and negative opinions of the students who go abroad within the scope of the Erasmus+ exchange program about the program. A quantitative study conducted within Hacettepe University on the Erasmus+ exchange program in Turkey shows that the expectations of most of the students participating in the program concerning social life, academic life and student support services are met. However, the expectations are not sufficient in some services (Yagci et al., 2007). The results of this research, which are handled with a qualitative approach, are thought to offer a new perspective to students who want to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange program. It is expected to assist candidate students in eliminating the question marks in their minds. In addition, it should not be overlooked that the research provides useful information to university administrations and Erasmus+ Coordinatorships. It is predicted that the suggestions in the research contribute to minimizing the problems faced by the students.

In this research, it is seen that university students are aware of the Erasmus+ exchange program in various ways. A study conducted on the awareness of undergraduate students about the Erasmus program revealed that approximately 77% of the undergraduate students participating in the study had insufficient knowledge about the Erasmus+ exchange program (Saban et al., 2019). To provide more information about the Erasmus+ exchange program and reach more students, it is recommended that the Erasmus Coordinatorships organize an orientation for the new university students about the Erasmus+ exchange program and to introduce students to this program earlier. This suggestion can maximize the interest and participation in Erasmus. In other words, promoting exchange programs to new university students can increase their awareness. Taşkaya, Unal, and Akbasli (2010) recommend that university administrations provide the students participating in the program with environments where they can share their experiences with other peers. This suggestion could be a new source of motivation for students considering attending the program. In this direction, activities such as

seminars, conferences and panels can be organized by the Coordination Offices of Foreign Relations within the university. Similarly, Dinçer, Aslan and Bayraktar (2017) recommend that students should be encouraged to show interest in the program, especially for successful students, and organize promotional activities where the effects of the program are revealed and experiences are shared.

As a result of this study, the motivation factors for the students to participate in the program are the sense of curiosity, the desire to experience abroad, the desire to develop socially and academically, the desire to learn a new foreign language or develop a foreign language, make new friends, get to know different cultures, take historical and touristic trips. Adanir and Sesam (2019) state that students participate in the program to get to know different cultures and improve their foreign language skills. The students participated in Aktan and Sari's (2010) study have stated that the experiences they gained from the program enabled them to have more self-confidence, have an intercultural perspective and that it is beneficial to develop their horizons. As a result of a study examining students' Erasmus+ experiences through digital stories, it has been revealed that the program is a process in which students discover new levels, experience different cultures, meet different people and confront themselves (Kabakçı & Şimşek, 2015). Similarly, Ersoy (2013) states that students participating in the Erasmus+ program have increased cultural awareness and that the program plays a positive role in overcoming their prejudices against cultures. Besides, Ozdem (2013) states that the Erasmus+ program contributes positively to the cultural exchange process as it provides students with the opportunity to meet different cultures. Considering the prominent contributions of the program in social, cultural and academic dimensions, it is important to encourage students to participate in the program. In addition, it is emphasized that the Erasmus+ exchange program is important that Turkey's historical, social, cultural and scientific opportunities are introduced by the students participating in the program (Paksoy, Paksoy & Ozcalici, 2012).

It is also seen in the study that students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program have difficulties in social and cultural dimensions. While some of these difficulties arise from the students' own characteristics, it is seen that some of them arise from their environment. In another study (Acikgoz, Catikoglu, Hephep, & Karaca, 2020), it was revealed that the problems experienced within the scope of Erasmus+ are experienced in the dimensions of economic, communication, cultural, prejudice, transportation and nutrition. It is important for students who are considering participating in the program to have prior knowledge on these issues in achieving the program's purpose.

In general, it is seen that the students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program leave this experience with satisfaction. Besides, there are some negativity faced by some students. Some of these negativities occur during the application process and some during their stay abroad. To prevent these negative experiences, Erasmus Coordinatorships in both countries should hold large-scale meetings with students and inform students about the country and university they will go to. In addition, the student's home university should be in constant contact with students abroad.

The research results show that Erasmus+ exchange program has an important role in students' lives and has positive effects on their social and academic lives. In addition to gaining new cultural experiences, the development of academic awareness has pleased the students. This result is expected to create a new world of thought for students who are hesitant to participate in the program.

This research reveals the views of 14 participants with Erasmus+ experience in seven different countries. In this respect, obtaining general views about the Erasmus+ program causes the limitation of this study. It is recommended for future studies that purposeful samples may include participants from specific countries. Thus, the views of students with experience in different countries can be compared or more detailed information about Erasmus+ life in a country can be obtained.

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