

ISRG JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND CULTURAL STUDIES (ISRGJHCS)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Humanit Cult Stud

ISSN: 3048-5436 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/gjhcs/>

Volume – I Issue - III (July-August) 2024

Frequency: Bimonthly



Being a Student in a Border City: The Case of Edirne, Turkey

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| **Received:** 06.08.2024 | **Accepted:** 10.08.2024 | **Published:** 11.08.2024

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Abstract

This study examines the life experiences and urban perceptions of university students studying in the border city of Edirne. The study addresses various topics such as why students choose Edirne, accommodation preferences, social lives, economic status, level of satisfaction with the city, and expectations after graduation. The research data were collected through a survey conducted with 381 university students. According to the research results, the primary reasons for students choosing Edirne include geographical proximity, quality of education, and existing living conditions. Most students live in dormitories during their first years, then move to student houses in subsequent years, and prefer to live alone again in their final years. Many students spend their leisure time socializing with friends but are forced to limit their social lives due to economic difficulties. Additionally, students appreciate the historical and cultural richness of Edirne but complain about inadequate economic opportunities and some disadvantages of being a border city (high prices, security concerns, etc.). The study shows that being a student in border cities is a complex experience. Students experience both advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, it is recommended that universities in border cities and local governments develop policies to address the issues faced by students and improve their quality of life.

Keywords: border city, university students, Edirne, life experience, social life, economic conditions

Introduction

The concept of the border can be understood as semi-permeable physical, social, economic, or cultural divisions that define the sense of belonging of individuals who have the potential to overcome and surpass these boundaries (Jiron, 2019). The study of borders is diverse regarding the types of borders being examined, the disciplines approaching them, and the geographical and spatial scales. Border studies have evolved from viewing borders as fixed regional limitations to seeing them as processes and gaining a more

complex understanding of the experience of being and living within borders. Despite the significant reduction in access issues due to social media and technology development, borders remain as geographical and physical limitations between national states or international identities. The city of Edirne, selected as the study area, is located in the northwest of the Marmara region of Turkey, covering the entire border with Greece and most of the border with Bulgaria. With its southern neighbor being the Aegean Sea, the city

has maintained its importance throughout history as a transit route due to its location. Edirne, situated in the Thrace region, separated from the Anatolian peninsula by the straits, is Turkey's farthest point in the European continent. This means that the city is at the border of the country and the Middle East with the European Union, being at the cultural and political frontier between the East and the West, encompassing this position's economic, social, and cultural consequences. The political border defining our national sovereignty also serves as a structure separating us from countries that have adopted the Euro, the currency of the EU, highlighting economic and ethnic differences. According to Pantea (2007), "Throughout history, borders did not prevent individuals and societies from communicating, nor did they stop communication; they were merely thresholds where communication occurred at a lower level. Within and outside borders were different group identities whose dimensions changed over time as they communicated, altering their mindsets and images of each other."

Conscious families ensure that their children receive the best education within their means to become beneficial individuals to themselves and society and contribute to their social development with supportive attitudes, behaviors, and communication (Eskicumalı & Eroğlu). University students, however, must evaluate existing opportunities or create their own throughout their educational lives. Students who stay away from their families to receive a better education often have to adapt to courses and a cosmopolitan school environment they have not encountered before, cope with the feeling of longing for their families and the environment they grew up in, meet their daily needs with limited economic resources, and manage psychological factors stemming from their age. Under these conditions, the international science education community has long recognized the lack of harmony between the teaching and learning of science and the personal worlds of students as a topic deserving of research attention (Jerez, 2008).

Due to its status as a border city, Edirne is geographically distant from other regions but close to neighboring countries. Although it receives migration from its rural areas and other provinces where its population relocated during World War II, Turkish Statistical Institute data indicates a population decline until 2010 (TUIK, 2024). This includes the city's border location, prominence in agricultural economics, proximity to major cities, and being within their attraction area (Yaşar, 2009). University students increased following the Strategic Plan adjustments by the Higher Education Council in 2007. Since 2008, due to the global economic crisis, Turkey has offered a more comfortable life for citizens from Europe (Alexiou, 2010). Additionally, the onset of civil wars in Syria and other Muslim-majority countries post-2010 led to migration and refugee movements, significantly increasing the number of migrants coming to Turkey for purposes other than tourism, such as work, education, family reunification, etc., with Turkey's status as a transit country for migration to Europe supporting this increase (Deniz, 2014).

From World War I onwards, and during events such as the mass return of the Turkish population from the Balkans in 1989 and the migration of Turkish citizens of Bulgarian origin, Edirne has become a province with a significant migrant population. Blending these diverse cultures has reinforced the understanding among the local populace of respecting human values, personal rights, and freedoms, regardless of identity. In this cultural richness, minority and disadvantaged groups arriving temporarily or permanently in

the city have found an environment where they can maintain their lives while preserving their identities.

Due to its status as a former capital, Edirne remained a city the sultan and his entourage visited for leisure and rest throughout the Ottoman period after the conquest of Istanbul. As a result of its river and sea borders, the city has historically been visited by both local and foreign traders and tourists due to the accessibility of small commercial ships along the river and maritime trade vessels reaching Saros Bay ports. This has contributed to the city's cosmopolitan outlook. Additionally, the early Ottoman-era Yıldırım Beyazıt Complex, which included the significant health institution of the time, the Darüşşifa, has established Edirne's ongoing suitability for health tourism with its comprehensive medical facilities and health investments. By the late 19th century, the opening of the railway service led to the Karaagac neighborhood being referred to as 'Little Paris' due to its entertainment and socialization opportunities (Emekligil Erdoğan, 2013). Similarly, today, Edirne is a tourism city with diverse socialization opportunities and historical, cultural, and natural values. Founded in 1982, Trakya University has led to an increase in the city's higher education population. It is a well-established educational institution with 14 faculties, four vocational schools, ten vocational colleges, five institutes, 36 research centers, and one state conservatory. Considering the city's total population of 414,714 and the central district's population of 191,470 according to 2022 data (URL 1, 2023), it is evident that the 37,537 university students, mostly studying in the central district, are significant in the context of the general population (TUSAD, 2022). While Edirne can be defined as a student city with this large student population, it is also a city where trade life is intensely experienced, including local tourism and citizens from neighboring countries. This constant flow and orientation to the city result in economic vibrancy, which, while advantageous for city traders, causes economic challenges for disadvantaged groups.

1. Literature Review

Regarding identity, large cities have been places where different groups of people come together for economic reasons (Horga & Costea, 2015). Similarly, border cities bring together various identities due to migration, education, work, or other social reasons. This situation allows people to preserve their identities while recognizing and eliminating prejudices about different cultural structures. It also provides a platform for disadvantaged groups to define and express themselves. Disadvantaged groups generally include children, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, immigrants, minorities, ex-offenders, women, single-parent families, and people with low incomes (Yeşil et al., 2019). According to a report prepared within the Social Inclusion Training Program framework published by the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Services, a disadvantage can be explained as an "inability to be self-sufficient" (Arkan & İrez, 2021). From this perspective, university students can also be considered disadvantaged as they cannot sustain their lives under normal conditions without family and scholarship support; otherwise, they must enter the workforce while maintaining their 'student' status.

When looking at studies on being a student in a border region, it is seen that the focus is primarily on students who reside in the area due to forced migration or who study in another border country under specific legal regulations due to insufficient opportunities in their own country. According to a report prepared by The Hechinger Report, an online news channel dedicated to education

news, thousands of students cross the Mexico border daily to attend schools in the United States for economic reasons (West, 2019). This report emphasized that these cross-border students, who continue to live in Mexico mainly due to economic reasons, have the potential to act as cultural bridges between the two nations. However, it was noted that anti-immigrant sentiments and the necessity to wait long at the border with many personal items negatively impacted their class productivity. Sayıcı and Özkan examined the experiences of Syrian students in a middle school in a border province of Turkey and how these experiences changed over time. Initially, refugee students faced communication problems due to language barriers and peer bullying. However, friendships developed between groups after learning Turkish, and communication evolved positively (Sayıcı & Özkan, 2022). In a study on how black and white individuals in Baltimore, a border city in Maryland, USA, adapted to living together, August Meier emphasized the importance of legal regulations supported by civil society organizations and top management in preventing intercultural conflict (Meier, 1961).

Border universities provide national and international students with educational opportunities, promoting cultural exchange and regional integration (Agnew, 2008). However, Scott (2010) notes that these universities may face challenges such as lack of resources, infrastructure issues, and bureaucratic obstacles. Nevertheless, border universities offer students a unique learning experience, helping them gain a global perspective and understand different cultures (Callahan, 2012). Border cities often become attractive centers for students seeking higher education opportunities. These students may choose border cities for better educational facilities, lower tuition fees, or the desire for a different cultural experience (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). However, student migration and mobility can also bring risks such as brain drain, cultural adaptation issues, and social exclusion (Savaş, 2015). Various factors influence the quality of life for students in border cities. Accommodation, transportation, healthcare services, social activities, and cultural opportunities significantly determine students' overall life satisfaction (Smith & Jones, 2018). For students with limited economic means, the cost of living and job opportunities in border cities can directly affect their quality of life. Students living in border cities may have a complex identity shaped by the interaction of different cultures. These students can maintain their cultural roots while adopting new cultural values and developing a hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994). The multicultural environment of border cities can help students expand their cultural understanding and reduce prejudices. Education policies aimed at higher education institutions in border cities should consider factors such as student migration, cultural diversity, and regional development. These policies should support students' academic success and facilitate social and cultural integration (UNESCO, 2015). Additionally, cross-border cooperation and joint projects can play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education in border universities and providing students with broader opportunities. Jerez defined the concept of the border as rural and urban and investigated the meaning of science education for students living in both groups in the northern region of Colombia. He concluded that students' perspectives on education vary according to cultural differences and suggested that common ground could be found through social topics such as philosophy, religion, and ethics (Jerez, 2008). Tuhanoğlu and Gizir, in another study on adaptation in the field of education, aimed to examine the psychometric properties of the University Adaptation Scale,

developed to determine university students' levels of adaptation to university across four primary dimensions (academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional), and tested its validity and reliability (Sevinç et al., 2020). The study emphasizes the importance of developing quality measurement tools that address the multidimensional adaptation processes of today's university students and discusses various areas of study that examine students' adaptation processes at personal, social, institutional, and academic levels.

When examining the relevant literature, it is seen that university students' loneliness and limited coping skills due to being away from their families and economic difficulties are addressed within the framework of personal adaptation (Chemers et al., 2001; Sevinç & Gizir, 2014; Julia & Veni, 2012). Studies examining students' participation in extracurricular activities organized by the school and their methods of spending free time focus on social adaptation (Duru, 2008; Salami, 2011). Research addressing institutional adaptation issues such as the features students pay attention to when choosing a department or university, whether the content of the education provided is meaningful for them (Astin, 1993; İlhan et al., 2018), and academic adaptation-based problems such as motivation, personality traits, and expectations from education (Krieg, 2013; Sevinç, 2010) also exist.

2. Method

In this study, the concept of the border is considered as "an urban space located at the inter-country border," and the way social and economic phenomena in the rest of the country and neighboring settlements in other countries are interpreted through this space by university students, who can also be considered at a border between education and professional life, is investigated. The perspectives of university students studying in Edirne, a border city, on the city and university education through the advantages and disadvantages of Edirne being a border city are examined. The survey questions prepared within this framework were inspired by various studies on the adaptation process of students to university or a different region encountered during the literature review. Survey questions were shared with university students online as a data collection method. The obtained data were first analyzed through frequency analysis on a question basis, focusing on students' most and least preferred options in each subject. Subsequently, students were grouped according to their region of origin (local or international) and work status (working or non-working), and it was examined whether there were any differences in the preferred propositions among these groups.

As of the 2022-2023 academic year, 41,973 students, including 4,581 international students, are at Trakya University in Edirne (TUSAD, 2022). Since the study universe consists of all university students in Edirne, including those in rural faculties and vocational schools, the sample calculation was based on the total number of students. According to Cohen's sample size table, the required sample size is 381, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Cohen et al., 2000). Assuming a response rate of approximately 20% to reach the minimum sample size, the online survey link was randomly distributed to 1,917 students from different faculties and vocational schools. The analyses were conducted based on data from 381 valid respondents out of the 390 participants who returned the survey. After collecting the survey data as an MS Excel table from the online Microsoft Teams environment, variable settings were made, and the data were

transferred to the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 program. Frequency and correlation analyses were conducted using this program.

3. Results

3.1. Frequency Analysis

Among the 381 students whose responses were considered valid through a random selection method, their demographic data is as follows;

- 66% are female, and 34% are male,
- Most students reported studying in **Edirne for one year (48%)**, two years (18%), four years (16%), three years (9,4%), and more than four years (8,4%),
- **Students' families predominantly (73.5%) reside in the Marmara Region**, with 8.4% coming from the Aegean Region and 7% from abroad. The total percentage of students from other regions is 11.5%, including the other regions of Anatolia,
- They stayed in Edirne; most **(46.5%) responded with dormitories**, followed by student houses (24%). Students staying with their families constitute 13.6%, while those living alone in apartments or flats total 15.2%,

- The frequency of visiting their families: **32.8% reported going home at the end of each term**, and 30.4% said they visit monthly,
- Most students **(62.5%) reported not working outside school**, while 37.5% indicated working full-time or part-time.

As seen in Table 1, the most prevalent reasons for **selecting Edirne for educational purposes** include its proximity to their residence (55.6%) and the fact that they already live in the city. The most notable reasons for choosing Trakya University include its being the most reasonable option (47.2%) and its quality in their preferred field (31.8%).

To evaluate their social lives in the city, students were asked, **"How do you spend your free time?"** The highest percentage of respondents (25.7%) indicated spending their free time "entertaining and relaxing with friends." An almost equal number (25.5%) reported having no free time. Students spending time on hobbies constitute 19.9%, while those spending time with their families or exploring the city are in the minority, at approximately 3.5%.

Table 1. Survey results (Unit: %)

Reasons for selecting Edirne city					
What is your reason for choosing Edirne?	I live here	10,5	What is your reason for choosing Trakya University?	Its large and comprehensive facilities	7,3
	Close to the city/district where I live	45,1		High concentration of foreign students	1,8
	My family's choice	5,2		My friend/relative is studying here	4,2
	It is a historical city	13,6		A quality university in my preferred field	31,8
	Living opportunities are more accessible	7,6		The number of faculty members is sufficient	1,3
	I have relatives here	5,2		It was the most plausible of the options	47,2
	It is a border city	12,6		My family's choice	6,3
Challenges and experiences					
Do you participate in activities organized within the school?	No	19,2	What are the challenges of living away from your family?	Homesickness	22,0
	If I am interested, I will participate	54,6		Economic troubles	34,9
	I'll join in when I have time	22,0		Language and cultural differences	1,6
	I create opportunities to participate	4,2		Health problems	3,1
If you are happy to live in Edirne, what is your reason(s).	Opinions about the city of Edirne			Problems with eating and drinking	12,6
	Natural assets of the city	18,9	What are the disadvantages of Edirne being a border city affecting you?	I don't have any difficulties	18,9
	It is safe against earthquakes	16,0		A large number of immigrants	24,1
	Historical value and cultural richness of the city	34,9		Economic situation of the city	34,6
	I can comfortably protect my personal rights and freedoms	33,6		International security	5,2
	Its people are respectful and understanding	40,2	What are the advantages of Edirne being a border city affect you?	It takes too long to get from where I live	10,5
	Close to metropolitan cities	22,0		The presence of tourists from border countries	25,5
	Training opportunities such as courses where I can improve myself are sufficient	3,1		I like to get to know people from different cultures	32,8
	Socialization opportunities are sufficient	16,8		Its people are open and understanding of different cultures	30,4
	Health facilities are sufficient	9,4	Would you consider staying in Edirne after graduation?	I can go abroad more easily	29,4
	It's easy to commute abroad	10,8		It has a border with the sea	5,2
	My family is here or close to the area where I live	32,5		Part-time job opportunities are high	2,1
	It is a safe city in terms of petty crimes	21,0		If there is a job opportunity, I can stay	63,3
	Sports facilities are sufficient	2,1		I'll push my means to stay	5,2
It is an economical city	5,5	I certainly wouldn't think about it		29,4	
I am not happy	2,1				

76.6% of students **participate in school activities** if they are in their area of interest or have time, while 4.2% create opportunities to participate. In contrast, 19.2% reported not participating in any activities. When asked about **the challenges of living away from their families** as university students in Edirne, the majority (34.9%) cited economic difficulties, 12.6% with food-related issues, and 3.1% with health problems. 22% experienced difficulty due to missing their families, while 18.9% reported no difficulties. Language and cultural differences were the most minor common challenges, reported by 1.6%.

Regarding their **satisfaction with living in Edirne**, students were asked to rate their agreement with 15 propositions, resulting in an average agreement rate of 17.9%. The propositions most commonly agreed upon are "people are respectful and understanding" (40.2%), "the city's historical and cultural richness" (34.9%), "personal rights and freedoms are easily protected" (33.6%), and "their families are nearby" (32.5%). Additionally, proximity to major cities (22%), safety from petty crimes (21%), and the city's natural resources (18.9%) were notable points of agreement. The least agreed propositions included sufficient sports facilities (2.1%), personal development opportunities like courses (3.1%), and the city's economic status (5.5%). 16.8% of students find socialization opportunities sufficient, while 16% are satisfied with earthquake safety, 10.8% with easy access to abroad, 9.4% with health facilities, and 2.1% reported dissatisfaction with living in Edirne.

When asked about **the disadvantages of Edirne being a border city**, the highest percentage (34.6%) mentioned the city's economic situation. Other significant disadvantages included the presence of foreign tourists (25.5%), the number of immigrants (24.1%), long travel times from their hometowns (10.5%), and international security concerns (5.2%). In contrast, when asked about **the advantages**, students most commonly appreciated meeting people from different cultures (32.8%), the open-mindedness and tolerance of the locals (30.4%), and the ease of traveling abroad (29.4%). The city's coastline was mentioned by 5.2%, and only 2.1% cited the abundance of part-time job opportunities as an advantage.

3.1. Comparative Analyzes

According to correlation analyses seen in Table 2, students from the Marmara region, where Edirne is located, expressed the highest dissatisfaction with the presence of immigrants (30%), the city's economic situation (30%), and the presence of tourists from border countries (27.1%). Only 5.7% mentioned long travel times from their hometowns as a disadvantage, and 7.1% expressed concerns about international security.

Among students from the Eastern Anatolia region, 25% were dissatisfied with the number of immigrants, while 16% of international students were bothered by this issue. No participants from other regions expressed similar concerns. International students were most dissatisfied with the presence of tourists from border countries (36%) and the city's economic situation (32%), with 16% mentioning long travel times from their hometowns.

The issue the students participating in the research complain about the most is the city's economic situation, followed by tourists from border countries and many immigrants. We have seen that all the students, especially from the Central Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia regions, are having economic difficulties. 80% of students from Central Anatolia reported working full-time, but all students from Southeastern Anatolia declared that they were not working. 62.5% of those from the Aegean region complain about the economic situation and only 12.5% work. 50% of those from Eastern Anatolia and approximately 30% from the Marmara and Black Sea regions see the city's economic situation as a disadvantage. However, none of the students from families in Eastern Anatolia reported working. 55.7% of the students from the Marmara Region said they primarily work in their field, while 30.8% of those from the Black Sea Region stated that they work part-time. 32% of international individuals are dissatisfied with the economic situation, while 44% are employed. Among the participants from the Mediterranean region, no students stated that they had financial problems, nor did any students state that they were working.

Regarding their **frequency of visiting family based on employment status**, among students working outside of school, 13% reported visiting their families Daily (Table 3). In comparison, 28% said they visit at the end of each term and monthly. 10.3% of non-working students visit their families daily, while higher percentages visit weekly/bi-weekly, monthly, or at the end of each term. 18% of working students visit their families annually, compared to 5.6% of non-working students.

Considering **activities based on employment status**, 35.4% of working students reported having no free time, compared to only 19.2% of non-working students. Non-working students spend more time socializing, exercising, and engaging in hobbies than working students, who spend their free time reading, with family, and exploring the city.

A chi-square test was applied to determine if there is a significant relationship between students' employment status and participation in school-organized activities, such as competitions and workshops. However, the Sig. value was 0.083, indicating no significant relationship between these variables.

Table 2. Disadvantages of Edirne city according to its region

		What are the disadvantages of Edirne being a border city affecting you?							
		A large number of immigrants	Economic situation of the city	International security	It takes too long to get from where I live	The presence of tourists from border countries	Working students	Total	
What region does your family live in?	Marmara	Count	84	84	20	16	76	156	280
		%	30,00%	30,00%	7,10%	5,70%	27,10%	55,71%	
	Black Sea	Count	0	4	0	1	8	4	13
		%	0,00%	30,80%	0,00%	7,70%	61,50%	30,77%	
	Central Anatolia	Count	0	5	0	0	0	4	5
		%	0,00%	100,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	80,00%	
	Aegean	Count	0	20	0	8	4	4	32
		%	0,00%	62,50%	0,00%	25,00%	12,50%	12,50%	
	Eastern Anatolia	Count	4	8	0	4	0	4	16
		%	25,00%	50,00%	0,00%	25,00%	0,00%	25,00%	
	Southeastern Anatolia	Count	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
		%	0,00%	100,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
	Mediterranean	Count	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
		%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	100,00%	0,00%	0,00%	
	Abroad	Count	4	8	0	4	9	11	25
		%	16,00%	32,00%	0,00%	16,00%	36,00%	44,00%	
	Total	Count	92	132	20	40	97	183	381

Table 3. Frequency of family visits and free time according to employment

		Frequency of gathering with their families				
		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	After semestre	Yearly
Employed		13,00%	14,00%	27,00%	28,00%	18,00%
Unemployed		10,30%	15,40%	32,50%	36,30%	5,60%
Count		44	56	116	125	40

		How do you spend your free time?							
		Reading	Online	Hobbies	Sports	Family	Traveling	Entertainment	No free time
Employed		8,20%	7,50%	10,90%	5,40%	5,40%	6,80%	20,40%	35,40%
Unemployed		6,80%	9,40%	25,60%	6,40%	1,70%	1,70%	29,10%	19,20%
Count		28	33	76	23	12	14	98	97

Table 4. Correlation of categories according to region of origin

		What are your reasons for choosing Edirne?							What are the challenges of living away from your family?						
		Living here	Near to home	Family offer	Historical city	Economic issues	Near relatives	Border city	Homesick ness	Economic problems	Language	Health problems	Self caring	No challenges	
Local		11,00%	48,50%	4,50%	13,50%	6,80%	5,60%	10,10%	Local	23,90%	37,50%	0,00%	3,60%	14,50%	20,50%
Abroad		0,00%	0,00%	16,00%	16,00%	20,00%	0,00%	48,00%	Abroad	17,40%	39,10%	26,10%	0,00%	0,00%	17,40%
Total		39	172	20	52	29	20	48	Employed	22,70%	31,20%	0,70%	2,80%	14,20%	28,40%
									Unemployed	24,30%	41,60%	2,30%	3,70%	13,10%	15,00%
									Total	84	133	6	12	48	72

		Reasons for satisfaction with Edirne														
		Natural assets	Earthquake resilience	Historical assets	Freedom	Respectful people	Metropolis	Education	Social	Health	Close to Europe	Close to family	Safety	Sports	Economic issues	Not satisfied
Local		17,7%	15,3%	36,3%	35,4%	41,0%	23,3%	3,5%	17,7%	9,4%	10,6%	35,4%	21,2%	2,4%	5,9%	1,2%
Abroad		47,5%	36,0%	35,8%	32,0%	52,0%	15,7%	0,0%	15,9%	16,0%	20,0%	15,0%	33,0%	0,0%	4,0%	16,0%
Total		19,8%	16,8%	36,3%	35,2%	41,8%	22,8%	3,3%	17,6%	9,9%	11,3%	34,1%	22,0%	2,3%	5,8%	2,2%

According to Table 4, most students from Turkey chose Edirne because of its proximity to their residence. Other important factors included its historical significance and status as a border city. For

international students, the primary reason was Edirne's status as a border city (48%). Ease of living conditions was a factor for 20% of international students, compared to 6.8% of local students who considered this alongside proximity to family.

Among students living away from their families, 37.5% of local and 39.1% of international students reported economic difficulties as the main challenge. Local students also reported family/home longing (23.9%), food-related issues (14.5%), and health problems (3.6%), while international students did not report health or food-related issues but mentioned cultural and language differences (26%). While overseas students' longing for home/family was less common than the opposite group, no one in this group reported having health problems or eating and drinking difficulties. Economic difficulties are seen as a primary problem for students, while longing for home/family is a secondary problem. Financial difficulties are less critical for students who are employed than those who are not, and the rate of those who state that they do not experience any difficulties is higher among working students.

A chi-square test was conducted to compare reasons for satisfaction with living in Edirne based on the region of origin. The Sig. value of 0.000, less than 0.05, indicates a significant difference. Both groups agreed on the city's respect and understanding of people, historical and cultural richness, and ease of protecting personal rights and freedoms. However, international students emphasized the city's natural resources, earthquake safety, and ease of traveling abroad, while local students prioritized proximity to family and significant towns.

Regarding the advantages of Edirne as a border city and intentions to stay in Edirne after graduation based on region of origin, both local and international students appreciated meeting people from different cultures. Other typical advantages included the locals' tolerance and ease of traveling abroad. However, the city's coastline and part-time job opportunities were more important to local students. Most students expressed willingness to stay in Edirne if job opportunities were available, with varying percentages across regions. The lowest rate of students willing to stay was from the Mediterranean region (5.7%), while students from other areas expressed similar levels of unwillingness to stay in Edirne after graduation.

4. Discussion

Border cities tend to exhibit an economic and cultural structure nourished by cross-border economic and cultural networks due to their geographic locations, requiring them to serve as bridges between the demographic structures of their country and neighboring countries (Medeiros & Ramírez, 2022). This results in these cities playing roles in the development processes of the country and the region, inevitably leading to the development of a multidimensional perspective and understanding among their residents. The continuous movement of their vibrant economies, created by the accepted procedures of merging the potential and opportunities of both sides, sometimes creates challenges for disadvantaged groups, making these cities attractive centers overall. However, this attraction remains limited to reflecting on distant regions of the country. In this study, the living conditions of students, who can be defined as an economically disadvantaged group, in the border city of Edirne were examined, focusing on accommodation, meeting individual and social needs, and educational opportunities. When examining the accommodation units where students stayed during their years of study, it was observed that they primarily stayed in dormitories or alone during their first year, then began staying in student houses from the second year onwards. By the fourth year, the percentage of students living alone or in student houses increased again. It can be inferred that students unfamiliar with the city and social

environment in their first year stay in dormitories for a while and then move to student houses, possibly with one or more friends, to feel more comfortable or to share costs and daily tasks. The desire to study together and socialize may also increase the demand for student houses. However, the increase in the percentage of students living alone again in their final years may be due to the increase in working students in higher classes, who can now manage independently and deal with increasing assignments and other responsibilities independently. These findings are consistent with previous research. For instance, Astin (1993) noted that students' accommodation preferences significantly impact their academic success and social adaptation. Students in dormitories have more access to academic and social support, while those in student houses live more independently and freely. Similarly, this study suggests students' accommodation preferences may affect their social habits and academic success. Additionally, the reasons for choosing Edirne, such as "proximity to my place of residence" and "the most reasonable option among the choices," indicate that economic and geographical factors are significant in students' higher education preferences (Horowitz, 2018, pp. 6-14). This situation suggests that universities in border cities are more accessible for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, making them a preferred choice.

5. Conclusion

When evaluating the reasons for choosing Trakya University, all students prioritized the quality of education and considered an environment where they could freely express themselves. Local students preferred the presence of acquaintances studying here, while international students favored the presence of many international students, indicating a sense of belonging, even if temporary, among international students. Students expressed the least satisfaction with the availability of courses and sports facilities in the city. Factors influencing their intention to stay in the city after graduation included the proximity of Edirne to their families, adequate health facilities, safety against earthquakes, the city's historical, cultural, and natural richness, and safety from petty crimes. When comparing these with the advantages provided by the city as a border city, the ease of traveling abroad and the locals' tolerance towards different cultures were the most significant factors for students willing to stay, even if they had to make an effort. Regarding the disadvantages of Edirne being a border city, the main criteria for students who did not consider staying after graduation included international security concerns, the city's economic situation, distance from their residence, and the presence of many immigrants. Students who noted that Edirne is not an economically viable city stated that daily and long-term tourists or permanent immigrants from abroad raise the prices of rents, food, etc., which they were dissatisfied with. Despite this, they acknowledged that they could easily protect their culture and personal rights and found the people understanding and tolerant, indicating that the concept of 'freedom' stems somewhat from this multi-identity structure (Çelik, 2019). The results of this study show that being a student in border cities is a complex and multidimensional experience. While students benefit from the cultural diversity, international learning opportunities, and geographical location offered by border cities, they also face economic difficulties, social adaptation issues, and identity conflicts. This situation is related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). Students who have difficulty meeting their basic physiological needs may also have difficulty meeting their social needs, such as belonging, love, and respect. This may

negatively affect their academic success and general life satisfaction. Educational institutions in border cities should collaborate with local governments to create policies and programs that assist students in overcoming these challenges. Institutions can help students by offering scholarships and financial support, providing affordable housing options, arranging social and cultural activities, and offering psychological counseling services.

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