Social Exclusion of Foreign Degree Seeking students in Sabanci University

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Jawwad Jamal Sherwani

An investigation into whether the foreign degree-seeking students experience social exclusion within the university settings at Sabanci. A survey was created and administered to almost 30% of the entire foreign student population at the university to judge whether students felt excluded or not. To further cement the claim, a similar sized control group also responded to the same survey to see whether Turkish students also felt the same level of exclusion or functionality failure as their counterparts. It was found that a much higher proportion of foreign students were dissatisfied at Sabanci (90%) and almost all respondents agreed that there was very little interaction between the foreign and Turkish students.

Contents

Introduction

The aim of this project was to investigate whether there existed a gap betweeen the foreign students and turkish students at Sabanci university. Of the many foreign students that Sabanci University proudly boasts about, many of them are often whining and complaining about the university, so I decided to investigate myself whether a claim could be made for the social exclusion of these foreign students.

This paper is divided into 3 sections, firstly, this introduction in which I will also look to explain what social exclusion is as explained by various theories and what aspects of it we are going to be focusing on in this project. Next I will share the methodology I have adopted and some information of the demographics of the respondents. In the final section, the results and the implication of the results will be discussed.

What is Social Exclusion?

The term social exclusion or marginalization was written by René Lenoir as early as 1974, who defined it as the process by which certain groups are unable to fully participate in the life of their communities and the consequences they face because of this. (Lenoir, 1974) Ajit Bhalla and Frederic Lapaye described it as a process which causes individuals or groups who are geographically

resident in a society, not to participate in the normal activities of the citizens in that society. (Bhalla, 1997)

Renowned Welfare Economist and Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, further popularized the notion and simply defined social exclusion as a process leading to a state of functioning deprivations, in effect, the inability to reach a certain level of well-being. He then drew attention to two features of social exclusion; the first is that exclusion is a relational concept referring to the lack of affinity between an individual and the wider community, and secondly that social exclusion is fundamentally different from poverty and despite the fact that both of these concepts may have an effect on each other, they remain very different. (Sen, 2000)

Individuals or groups are socially 'excluded' when they lack effective participation in key activities or benefits of the society in which they live (Hills, Le Grand, and Pichaud 2002; Klasen 1995). The concept of social exclusion focuses on the relationship between these people and mainstream society as well as the process through which this relationship develops over time (Room 1995).

Atkinson (1998) identified three central features of exclusion: relativity, agency, and dynamics. Relativity implies that exclusion is always defined in comparison to other individuals or groups who occupy similar space and time. Agency means that someone or something actively generates exclusion. Finally, dynamics refers to the fact that exclusion is generated by a variety of social and economic factors that negatively impact on future participation in society.

Other theorists have also had their own take on defining social exclusion. In fact, Chakravarty and D'Ambrosio argue that there are three broad interpretations of social exclusion. In the first, it is interpreted as the lack of participation in social institutions (Duffy, 1995, Rowntree Foundation, 1998, UK House of Commons, 1999, Paugam and Russell, 2000); whereas the second

regards the problem as the denial or non-realization of rights of citizenship (Room, 1995, Klasen 1998). Finally, the third views social exclusion in terms of increase in distance among population groups (Akerlof, 1997).

As almost all these definitions of social exclusion are quite varied yet quite near each other, for the sake of this project we will look at two main aspects of social exclusion. Firstly, do foreigners suffer from a denial of a set of rights that other students are able to enjoy, and what is the perceived importance of this denial of rights? In essence, this is a question of functioning, a notion we will be focusing on in greater detail. Our other aspect is the perceived distance among population groups? Is there a culture of in-group out-group and is it prominent?

What are the effects of Social Exclusion?

There are quite a few effects that can be observed in individuals or groups that have been marginalized. There are pre-dominant theories about the rise in crime and poverty, however for our context we will disregard those and look at behavior trends that would be more realistic at our university.

Firstly, Social exclusion is shown to "rob" the confidence of people who are excluded, which adversely affects their capacity to function effectively, and Borooah argues that in a "just" society no individual should suffer from a confidence deficit. (Borooah, 2010)

Twenge and Baumeister also carried out a series of experiments that were published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology under the flagship of the American Psychological Association which found quite a few negative traits associated with social exclusion. Most relevant to our case, they found that social exclusion resulted in a strain on cognitive processes, and it hindered the ability of students to perform well on tests, respond well in classes and reduced intelligent thought. (Baumeister, 2002) They also found that social exclusion could cause self-defeating behavior, which leads to individuals undertaking unnecessary risk, leading an unhealthy

Jawwad Jamal Sherwani
Ozgur Proje-Final Report
Social Exclusion of Foreignl Degree-seeking students at Sabanci University

4

lifestyle and increased procrastination. (Twenge B. C., 2002) Finally, they also concluded that social exclusion can lead to increased aggression and had a direct effect on frustration and emotional instability. (Twenge B. T., 2001)

Thus, it is of notable importance that we test whether the international degree-seeking students are socially excluded or not. Aside from the moral argument, social exclusion can lead to unfavorable outcomes and may lead to many students underperforming in their classes. Hence, we need to test my hypothesis and look to rectify or reduce the severity of the social exclusion.

Methodology

Two separate surveys were created for this project, the firstly was administered to the foreign student population at Sabanci. Of the 60 respondents, both genders were represented (23 females, 37 Males) and all levels except FDY were included. Furthermore, exchange students were not included in this survey as it targeted full degree seeking students only. For the slightly varied Turkish student version, 40 respondents (22 Female and 18 male) represented all education levels as well.

Both surveys began with demographic questions to ensure that different levels were represented. These were followed by academic questions and perceived performance levels and language levels. This was followed by the functionalities tables, the quantitative section of the survey. They asked respondents to rate different functions of university life in terms of their importance, and then asked respondents to rate how well Sabanci University performed at fulfilling these functions (for example a friendly environment in classrooms, school events, support groups, etc). The final part of the survey had identification questions for foreigners, such as whether they

feel as they have been socially excluded individually or as a whole, whilst for the Turkish students the questions were more traits-specific, such as whether they would consider rooming with a foreign student, whether they felt the presence of foreigners had improved their overall university experience, amongst other things.

All respondents are from Sabanci University as the access form was available to only those with an '@sabanciuniv.edu' email address, furthermore the student IDs were collected for all those that participated to be able to recheck that all students were valid Sabanci university students. The true shortcoming of the data is that the data set is very small, especially for the number of Turkish students responding. Had the timing of the project been better (i.e not in the summer semester), perhaps the data sample for Turkish students could have been larger. Another issue is that most of the foreigners are Pakistanis, which is a fair representation of the foreign student population at the university; however, it doesn't consider cultural biases.

Results

Even though the functionality table didn't reflect much of a deprivation for foreign students as compared to the control group of Turkish students, the identification made for much starker differences. Both groups complained that Sabanci does not provide the kind of social events and have enough extracurricular activities, but praised the school's ability to provide a friendly classroom environment and research facilities.

However, where the result was worry-some was that **only 9%** (4 of 43) of foreign undergraduate students have claim that their decision to enroll at Sabanci University was a good one, the corresponding number **is 72%** (26 of 36) for Turkish students. The percentages for Sabanci University providing the expected University experience **are 7% and 58%** respectively. Both sets of respondents in undergraduate level felt that that the foreign students were unable to blend well with the Turkish students and that the universities efforts were unsatisfactory in helping better

assimilation**. 92%** of individuals surveyed at the undergraduate level (72 of 79) felt that more should

be done to improve the coherence of the student body. This number is markedly better for

graduate students, only **38%** felt similarly.

Looking at what might be possible determinants for this clear social exclusion makes for

even more interesting reading. Almost all Turkish individuals **(98%)** that participated claimed that

they are either indifferent or would prefer rooming with a foreign student and have claimed that

they are interested in learning foreign languages or about foreign culture. Similarly, most foreign

students **(92%)** said they would prefer rooming with foreign nationalities but a smaller number

(76%) said they were interested in learning about a foreign language or culture. Most Foreign

students **(85%)** cited the language barrier as the reason for this social exclusion whilst most Turkish

students didn't agree **(23%).** The following table summarizes most of the responses of both groups:

QUESTION	FOREIGN RESPONSE (%)	TURKISH RESPONSE (%)	OVERALL RESPONSE (%)
Good decision to enroll at Sabanci?	20	75	42
Lived up to college life expectations?	7	58	27
Have you socialized well with the other group?	18	84	45
Are foreigners socially excluded?	92	85	89
Rooming with foreigner?	92	98	94

Does the presence of foreigners improve your college experience?	**Question not asked to this group**	73%	73%

Conclusion

There is a strong feeling that the exponential increase in the foreign degree seeking students from a handful to a few hundred in the last 4 years has assisted the rapid rise of Sabanci University in the global university rankings, as student diversity is an important component. As a university ranked as high as 181st in the Times Higher Education rankings, it is unacceptable that such a high proportion of foreign students have claimed their dissatisfaction at their student life. With the policy of aggressive foreign student recruitments, with more and more foreign students pouring in from different regions of the world, it is perhaps the right time that the understaffed IRO was to take responsibility on following through on the promises they make about student life at Sabanci.

Many foreign students have personally claimed to be either stressed or actually believe they might be depressed due to their inability to make meaningful relations at college. With foreign students becoming increasingly isolated, it is difficult to see any real end to this social exclusion unless the responsible departments make a more sincere effort at not just luring the students to Sabanci, but also to ensure they are happy.

Despite foreign students representing more than 10% of the student body, most student clubs are run in Turkish, which immediately restricts the ability for students to socialize outside class hours. Ensuring all students have access to these clubs through using English as the medium of instruction would allow students of similar interests to socialize better. The buddy program is largely ineffective for degree seeking students, I would suggest selecting someone from the upper levels of

Jawwad Jamal Sherwani
Ozgur Proje-Final Report
Social Exclusion of Foreignl Degree-seeking students at Sabanci University

8

FDY to pair with the foreign students as those Turkish students are yearning to improve their English while the foreign students may not only learn some Turkish but will also have the chance to make new friends. Finally, a friendly atmosphere at Sabanci is quite rare, aside from the annual SUSpring fest, it is incredibly rare for all the students to gather at any place outside, perhaps allowing Muzikus or RadyoSu to hold monthly concerts outside would encourage students to spend more time on campus and together.

Of course, these suggestions will need to be discussed well in detail; however, they would be steps in ensuring the satisfaction of not only the entire student population, but specifically of the socially excluded foreign students that almost unanimously are unhappy with their time at Sabanci University. It is hard to believe that such problems aren't rampant at other major universities in Turkey.

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