

# Monitoring Report on Access to the Right to Education in Higher Education After Disaster

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**TUİC**  
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER  
ÇALIŞMALARI DERNEĞİ



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# Preface

Dear Readers,

This study which we, International Relations Studies Association (TUIÇ), have carried out for monitoring the right to access to education in higher education after the 6th February Kahramanmaraş earthquakes contains important findings regarding the protection and improvement of the right to education in the post-disaster recovery period. Carried out with support from the ETKİNİZ European Union Programme, this study aims at drawing attention to the fact that the right to education is a basic human right and that it is important to protect such right in the post-disaster periods.

This report inclusively deals with the difficulties experienced and problems encountered in the region after the earthquake and suggestions of solution for such problems. Focal point of our study is comprised of monitoring the access to the right to education in higher education in the aftermath of disaster and the data obtained through field observations, focus group studies and questionnaires have been analysed in this process. Findings contained in the report bears great importance in terms of identifying the inequalities and barriers experienced in access to the right to education particularly in higher education.

We thank all TUIÇ volunteers who have had hands in the accomplishment of this study, to those students and academicians who have contributed to the field works, to our mentor Burcu Yeşiladalı and to the ETKİNİZ European Union Programme supporting the Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Programme. Further, we express our gratitude to all representatives of non-governmental organisations and activists who have contributed to the preparation of the report and all who have participated in our study.

This report has strategic importance and authenticity on right basis in terms of overall framework which it draws around the existing problems and of providing qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, we wish the report will be a significant reference document towards protecting and improving the access to right to education in higher education in the aftermath of disaster. We wish our study will be taken into consideration by decision-makers and the public and draw on taking tangible steps for protecting and supporting the right to education at all levels.

Best regards,

**Burak Yalım**

**International Relations Studies Association (TUIÇ)  
Chairman of the Association's Board of Governors  
May 2024**



recover2gether

## Brief Information on International Relations Studies Association (TUIÇ) and Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Programme

International Relations Studies Association (TUIÇ) was established in 2008 in order to generate solutions for the problem of 'employability' which the students who kept attending their education at the Faculties of Economic and Administrative Sciences located in the Anatolian cities encountered due to their disadvantageous position by the undergraduate students themselves. This idea became a platform through a common declaration signed by 18 undergraduate clubs as a result of search conferences organised in four Turkish cities and attended by 238 university students in 2009. Following the foundation of the platform, six undergraduate congresses to which 1500 university students attended and in which 108 university students gave presentations until 2021. Outputs created as a result of all these congresses were made into reports and transmitted to the decision-making mechanisms. It has been decided that the platform should have a legal entity as a result of the feedbacks from the negotiations with organisations and the negotiations within the organisation itself and the International Relations Studies Association was established in 2011. In 2020 a decision was made to carry out the right-based monitoring, reporting and advocating operations on the youth rights and global current problems via digital media upon the COVID-19 pandemic which affected the whole world. In this context, o-Internship programme which is an online Internship programme was started. The Association displays an approach for setting up a twin of the social capital which it has set up in the non-governmental field by carrying out the operations which it has been carrying out through the o-Internship operation together with such operations as Uliwiki – International relations Dictionary.

Programme Birlikte İyileşiyoruz may be described as one of the innovative methods which started to be implemented in and after 2020. The Programme has been set up as a response of the Association intended for multiple crises such as climate crisis, irregular immigration movement and natural disasters and a structural means of response in the periods of recovery. Through the voluntary support given by the academic circle at local, national and international levels with which the Association is in connection, the programme held its very first meeting on February 8, 2023 immediately after the disaster and officially started to operate on February

27. The programme was implemented by setting it up as a completely free content of 180 hours in total in 14 modules and in the moderation of one academician per module in the weekdays for a period of 12 weeks.

We received 181 applications for the Programme Birlikte İyileşiyoruz from all over Türkiye, pre-eminently from the earthquake area. Of 181 university students, 93 were included into the programme and, 58 of them completed the programme and received certificates. Upon the completion of the programme, the feedback we received on 'sustainability and social impact' both from the participants and the academicians caused an approach to dealing with the issue

of access to education more inclusively to be developed with a right-based perspective in post-earthquake recovery rather than considering the programme to be a one-off operation. This approach is based upon the feedbacks as to the fact that the support is one which activates the collective support of the programme participants together with the other participants and which is supplementary in psycho-social terms.

With the work Birlikte İyileşiyoruz II,<sup>1</sup> which has been brought into being with support from the European Union – Sivil Düşün Programme, a solution has been developed to the problem arising from the failure to enter the initial programme in records by making the courses retractable. This solution has been the 30-minute recording of the courses identified through volunteer academicians via digital media, making such records user-friendly and sharing the same through the Association's channels producing digital contents.

## Executive Summary

This report contains the findings and suggestions of the study carried out by the International Relations Studies Association (TUIÇ) on monitoring the right to access to education in higher education after the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquake. The study has been accomplished with support from the ETKİNİZ European Union Programme.

**Object and Scope of the Study:** Basic object of the study is the protection of the right to access to higher education and the determination of the violations of this right. In this context, the problems encountered in the higher education institutions located in the regions affected by the earthquake and especially in the province of Hatay by the university students and academicians have been studied in detail. The quantitative aspect of the research has further covered the participants located in the provinces of Adana, Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye and Şanlıurfa in addition to the province of Hatay.

**Method:** The report is based on the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data. Data obtained through field observations, focus group studies and questionnaires reveal the barriers experienced in access to education and the suggestions set forth in order to overcome such barriers. In the study, the impacts of such vulnerability situations as social gender, disability, etc. have been specifically taken into consideration.

### Findings:



**Barriers in Access to Education:** Such basic problems as internet access, lack of proper studying areas, access to technological devices and safe sheltering have constituted the serious barriers encountered by university students in their educational processes.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see. <https://birlikteiyilesiyoruz.org/hakkimizda/>



**Social Gender Inequality:** Social gender inequality which female university students encounter in education has become more distinct in the period after the earthquake.



**Deficiency of Digital Education Infrastructure:** Deficiencies of technical infrastructure in the post-earthquake remote education periods have adversely affected the educational activities of the university students and the academicians.



**Need for Psychological and Social Support:** University students' need for psychosocial services and social support services has increased in the post-earthquake period.

## Recommendations:



**Strengthening of Infrastructure:** It is required to rapidly repair the physical infrastructure of the educational institutions and make them durable to disasters.



**Technical Support and Digital Transformation:** It is important to strengthen the digital educational platforms and technological infrastructures and to support the remote and hybrid educational models.



**Social Gender Equality:** Special support programmes and psychological support services should be developed for female university students.



**Psychological Support:** Support mechanisms which will fulfil the psychological and social needs of the university students in the aftermath of disaster should be constituted.



**Multi-Lingual Education:** Multi-lingual support systems and intercultural educational materials should be provided for international graduates.

**Conclusion:** This report presents a comprehensive analysis for the protection and improvement of the right to access to higher education in the aftermath of disaster. It reminds the decision-makers and relevant stakeholders of the fact that tangible steps should be taken for the protection of the right to education at all levels. We, TUIÇ, believe that the right to access to education should be considered to be a basic human right and protected in this period.

## INTRODUCTION

The monitoring study titled "Monitoring the Access to Right to Education in Higher Education in the Aftermath of Disaster" has been planned on the basis of the observations and accumulations obtained under the "Birlikte İyileşiyoruz" Programme which were put into practice immediately after the February 6 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes and the February 20 Defne Earthquakes and implemented with support from the European Union – ETKİNİZ Programme. In the first section of the report, the analysis of the current situation and the regulatory infrastructure will be presented. Secondly, the object,


goals, scope and importance of the study “Monitoring the Access to Right to Education in Higher Education in the Aftermath of Disaster” implemented with support from the “European Union – ETKİNİZ Programme as the “International Relations Studies Association – TUIÇ and Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Programme will be dealt with. Afterwards, the report will be concluded with the sections entitled the method, findings, evaluation and suggestions.

## **CURRENT SITUATION: A “HUMAN RIGHTS”-BASED LOOK INTO THE ISSUES OF ACCESS TO RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTIPLE CRISES AND REGULATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Effective application of the right to education allows individuals to improve themselves both personally and socially, to increase in their capabilities of access to information, to acquire professional skills and to undertake an effective role in the society. In this context, the right to education has intertwined with several other rights such as freedom of speech, right to access to information, right to employment, etc.

Emergencies and periods of crisis create a social structure which is complex, unstable and constantly transforming. Such social structure transforms with such events as natural disasters, epidemics, irregular and transborder mobility, pandemic, etc. and leaves irrecoverable impacts on the educational system. In the periods of crisis, not only the physical infrastructure of the higher education institutions is damaged but an increase occurs in such issues as the reduction in both physical and psychological endurance of the academic personnel and university students.

According to the data which the Union of Employees of Education and Science reported from the visits which they paid to the earthquake area in 2023, there are 340.000 university students attending education and 45.000 academic and administrative staff members work in 111 different campuses of 16 universities located in the area. They have been exposed to the impacts of earthquake in the first degree. Nine percent of the university students all over the country are registered in the higher education institutions in the area. The sum of the university students attending education in the 11 provinces in the earthquake area and those university students who reside in the area but attending education in the provinces other than those in the area occupies a share of 18 percent. Looking from this perspective, one of 5 university students has been exposed to the earthquake disaster. Further, although there are approximately 340.000 university students attending education in the area, the capacity of dormitories was only some 60.000 prior to the earthquake. The need for dormitories has further increased when the dormitory buildings which remained out of service upon the earthquake disaster experienced are added to such deficiency. Some of the universities in the area have



One of 5 university students has been exposed to the earthquake disaster.



announced that they will give a significant part of the courses via remote education upon the senate decisions made. Moreover, as a great number of the dormitories in Kahramanmaraş were damaged to an irreparable degree, it was planned that 9.300 university students staying at such dormitories would stay in tents. For this purpose, the university management decided to set some 450 tents in different forms in the land of 59 decares located within the campus. It is possible for the university students to stay in such tents which fail to fulfil any humane

conditions. Sheltering problem of university students has become one of the most significant problems of the area. Together with those who have enrolled anew, the students of vocational schools of higher education and faculties especially located in the town centres are among those who feel the sheltering problem most. Another problem has been the fact that the university students' urgent and vital sheltering needs are exploited by various illegal groups. In the report, it has been further emphasised that as several religious orders and other similar organisations have provided students with sheltering opportunities for many years, thus making this opportunity into a means of gathering people, this fact will be much more effective in the earthquake area.

This section summarises the current situation regarding the right to access to higher education after the earthquake and the evaluation of this situation from the human rights perspective. Protection and improvement of the right to education should be a basic priority in the post-disaster recovery periods. In this context, studies and reports published on the matter as well as the national and international regulations in the context of post-earthquake right to access to higher education have also been studied. Main reports and regulations taken into consideration in this study are the following:

## National and International Regulations

**a. UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966):** According to the General Interpretation No. 13 of this convention, it is mentioned that different lecturing techniques such as a flexible curriculum and remote education are required, that higher education should be in "various forms" in practice and that higher education should also be "accessible for every one on personal ability basis" so that higher education may respond to the requirements of students in various social and cultural environments. According to the subparagraph (c) of the paragraph 2 of the article 13, higher education is not "accessible for every one". "Personal abilities" of individuals should be determined by their relevant experiences and practices. On the other hand, the General Interpretation No. 13 of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights describes the scope of the right to education and the obligation of the states to make higher education free progressively. According to the General Interpretation, the states are obliged to make higher education free progressively.

**b. UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** The convention is a United Nations convention aiming at allowing women to have equal rights in social, economic and political life. Article 10 of CEDAW aims at guaranteeing women to have equal access to and opportunities of education. CEDAW<sup>2</sup> requires the prevention of any discrimination in women's access to education. This is also valid in the process of access to higher education. That is to say, it complies with the requirements of the article 10 of CEDAW that there should not be any barriers in women's access to higher education.

**c. Sendai Framework Principles for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030):** Within the scope of these principles aiming at reducing the life, livelihood, health and economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental asset losses of the countries to a significant level, it is emphasised that human rights should be protected in the processes of preparation for and response to disasters and recovery. Observation of the right to access to higher education is associated with the minimisation of the opportunity inequalities under disaster conditions in the field of education.

**d. Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) Protecting Human Rights in Disaster Response-Guidelines for State and Non-State Actors:** According to the expression contained in the section entitled "5. Recommendations to Protect Human Right to Education", "The human right to education should be respected and protected. It should be understood as the right to receive, without discrimination, an education in all its forms and at all levels that is accessible, acceptable and inclusive." Also, according to this document, the state and other actors involved in relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts should ensure that the return of the children and youth school or education programmes in safe learning environments is facilitated without discrimination, as early and as quickly as possible after the disaster, even if documentation which is usually required has been destroyed. Access to secondary and higher education, to the extent possible, is not disrupted, in particular when students can no longer afford studies as a consequence of the disaster.

**e. Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye:** Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye states that any one may not be deprived of the right to education and that everyone is entitled to the right to education.

<sup>2</sup> For this report, see [https://www.egitimis.org.tr/files/upload/files/DEPREM%20RAPORU\(1\).pdf](https://www.egitimis.org.tr/files/upload/files/DEPREM%20RAPORU(1).pdf)

## Reports and Other Studies Published Regarding Access to Education

**f.IASC/Inter-Agency Standing Committee Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disaster(2011):** According to the expression contained in the subparagraph B.2.6 of the document, the human right to education should be respected and protected. It should be understood as the right to receive, without discrimination, an education in all its forms and at all levels that is accessible, acceptable and inclusive. Whether displaced or not, the return of the children and youth school or education programmes in safe learning environments is facilitated without discrimination, as early and as quickly as possible after the disaster, even if documentation which is usually required has been destroyed. Special effort should be made in order to provide the members of the other marginalised groups affected by the disaster as well as girls and women with full and equal access to education and the cultural identity, language and traditions of the affected individuals should be respected.

**g.Report on 2023 Kahramanmaraş and Hatay Earthquakes:** This report published in March 2023 by the Republic of Türkiye-Presidency-Department of Strategy and Budgeting presents quantitative and qualitative data regarding the pre- and post-disaster higher education institutions. The total number of the students attending education in 16 universities in the disaster area is approximately 340.000 people; the number of academic personnel is approximately 17.000 people and the number of administrative staff members is approximately 26.000 people. It is stated in the same report that 9 service buildings with an indoor area of 7.714 m<sup>2</sup> at 17 universities in the disaster area were destroyed and that 111 service buildings with an indoor area of 273.293 m<sup>2</sup> were heavily damaged.

**a.Decisions of the Council of Higher Education and Other Applications:** Due to the magnitude of the earthquake and the impact of this disaster over the country, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) announced that it had been decided that it would be proper to complete the spring semester of the academic year 2022-2023 via remote education all over the country on the basis of the earthquake disaster centred on Kahramanmaraş. This decision was made due to the fact that the student dormitories were allocated to the victims of the earthquake. Ali Yerlikaya, Governor of İstanbul, stated that the KYK dormitories were prepared for the accommodation of those whose dwellings had been damaged by the earthquake. Through another practice in higher education, YÖK matched the universities damaged by the earthquake<sup>3</sup> with

<sup>3</sup> For Newspaper report, see. <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/depremedeler-istanbulda-bulunan-kyk-yurtlarına-yerleştiriliyor>

different universities in order to carry out an academic and administrative assignment in the solution of their problems, provide information support and carry out common studies. It was intended that the students could benefit from the amenities of the universities with which they were matched as if they were the students of such universities, that the students and academicians affected by the earthquake could get psychosocial support from the specialists in the relevant units of the universities with which they were matched and that the students could thus carry on their education without experiencing any uncertainties until the conditions became normal in the earthquake area.

## OBJECT, GOAL, SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The right to access to education is predominately dealt with at elementary and secondary education levels in the post-disaster recovery period by the governmental and non-governmental organisations. This causes the issue of access to higher education not to be dealt with sufficiently and its visibility in the public vote to be of secondary importance.

The **main object of the monitoring study** which we, TÜİÇ, started upon the support decision of the ETKİNİZ Programme is to document the violations experienced by the university students who encountered violations of rights in accessing to education after disasters; to influence the decision-making mechanisms for the elimination of such violations and to ensure their accountability on the matter. This study has set as a basic goal the fact that it should be emphasised that **the right to access to education** is a basic human right and that it is required to be protected at all levels in the post-disaster recovery period.

The **subgoals** created under the study in accordance with this background are the following:

### As the first subgoal in the study;

- It has been aimed at determining how the curricular planning first basing upon the online and then hybrid systems in education after the February 6 Kahramanmaraş Earthquake affected the right to access to education when the post-disaster infrastructural conditions were taken into consideration. In carrying out such monitoring, resources at different levels (spatial deficiency, technological inadequacy, failure to harmonise the curriculum with online education) have been analysed and violations of rights have been identified through the accessibility of such resources.

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## In the study as the second subgoal;

- It has been targeted to monitor whether the 'fragility' creative conditions with which the **refugees, handicapped individuals, women, youth, LGBTIQ+** living in the temporary sheltering centres encounter in the post-disaster recovery period and disadvantaged individuals who **keep living in the countryside have regenerated inequality** in access to education or in other words, **whether or not such conditions deepen the inequality even more** and to share the findings to be obtained in monitoring with the public and the decision-making mechanisms.

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In accordance with these objects, goals and subgoals, the study draws a framework which is compliant with the goal "*significantly reducing the disaster damage caused on the critical infrastructure including healthcare and educational facilities and disruption of technical services, including the improvement of the durability thereof by 2030*" which is one of the priorities and goals of the **Sendai Framework Principles for Disaster Risk Reduction**, which aim at reducing the life, livelihood, health and economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental asset losses of the countries to a significant level and which is also agreed upon by Türkiye.

The study has been also implemented to take as a basis the provisions of the article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to which Türkiye is a party reading, "*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*" and "*Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.*"

It has been planned to carry out the study in Hatay, which is one of the cities most affected by the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. However, more than 300.000 students who attend a total of 17 universities and constitute 12% of the population registered in higher education and more than 10.000 academicians in the geographical area where the earthquakes occurred have been affected by the inequalities caused by the disasters.

Therefore, the questionnaire forms were extended to cover the participants in the cities of Adana, Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye and Şanlıurfa in addition to the province of Hatay in the process of collecting the study data. The target group of the study are divided into three groups as beneficiaries, duty-bearers and organisations and groups related with the matter:

**1. Beneficiaries:** Students and academicians staying in the city due to higher education during and/or after the disaster, the students who attend their education in higher education in different cities of Türkiye but are directly connected with the disaster area due to their families or relatives, academicians and representatives of non-governmental organisations are included in this group.

**2. Duty-Bearing Organisations:** The Ministry of National Education (MEB), Council of Higher Education (YÖK), universities, local administrations and relevant governmental organisations are included in this group.

**3. Organisations and groups related with the matter:** local and national non-governmental organisations, disaster management and aid organisations, international organisations and programmes and academic and research organisations are included in this group.

In terms of the study, the right to education in higher education on which we focus is of critical importance not only in contributing to the personal development of individuals but also in ensuring their welfare and social justice. The state's guaranteeing the right to education and making any necessary regulations in this field has been secured by the Constitution. However, the fact that the right to education covers 12 years within the scope of "compulsory education" in Türkiye as in many world countries excludes the higher education issue. The fact that this study prepared focusing on the "access to higher education" makes it authentic and significant.



# METHOD

In accordance with the object of the study, both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used together in the data collection and analysis processes. Within the scope of the monitoring study, data have been collected through questionnaire study, focus group study and field observations.

## Questionnaire Studies (Quantitative Aspect)

### Participants

- A total of 54 individuals have participated in the questionnaire. Of the participants, 53,7% are women, 40,7% men, 3,4% others and 2,2% do not want to state their gender. The participants are consisted of the students at the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University (6%3), İskenderun Technical University (24%) and other universities (13%).

### Application Process of the Questionnaire

- The questionnaire study was applied on online basis between March 1, 2024 and March 31, 2024. The participants were allowed 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Questionnaires contain questions about access to education, difficulties encountered and needs for support.

### Verification of the Data

- In order to ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire data, we reviewed the replies given by the participants in terms of consistency and removed any contradictory data from the analysis.

## Focus Group Studies (Qualitative Aspect)

### Participants

- Ten individuals have participated in the focus group study. Of the participants, 5 are women and 5 men. The participants are consisted of the representatives of NGOs operating in the field, academicians and students. These participants<sup>4</sup> may be described in the following manner:
  1. Alihan, Project Coordinator of the Association X operating in the field and working with focus on the youth
  2. Ayşe, a volunteer of the Association Y accomplishing projects in the field and carrying out studies based on women and social gender
  3. Joseph, a student of foreign nationality attending his education at the Mustafa Kemal University in Hatay

<sup>4</sup> Names of the participants in the focus group study are the names given by research team in order to protect the personal data but not the real names of the participants.

- 4. Ahmet, an academician employed by a university out of Hatay, which contributes to the online education under the Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Programme
- 5. Defne, Özlem, Onur and Cihan, who are attending their education at the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University
- 6. Doğa, who graduated from the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University last year
- 7. Betül, a volunteering participant who resides in Ankara and follows the developments in Hatay

### **Application Process of the Focus Group**

- In order to identify the problems experienced in accessing to higher education and the needs in Hatay in the aftermath of the disaster, a focusgroup study was carried out in which 11 individuals including the moderator participated on the Zoom platform on March 27, 2024. The moderator of the focus group study was Burak Yalım, Chairman of the TUIÇ Association. The moderator provided the participants with brief information about the object of the meeting and introduced the participants to one another. The meeting took 90 minutes and audio recording of the opinions and suggestions of the participants was made. The participants were asked their opinions and suggestions on four main topics (general problems about higher education, problems of access and equality, supports and resources) in the study. Data so obtained were later transcribed and analysed and reported.

### **Selection of Participants**

- The participants have been selected in consideration of their experience and fund of knowledge on the post-disaster right to education. Students, academicians and representatives of the non-governmental organisations have been ensured to have a well-balanced participation.

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## **Desk-Based Research**

### **Study of References**

- National and international regulations, previous studies and reports have been studied. Such documents as the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Sendai Framework Principles for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye have been taken as a basis.

### **Verification of Data**

- The resources reviewed have been chosen from the governmental reliable ones the accuracy of the information has been cross-checked.



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## Restriction of the Study

### Time Limitations

- The study has been carried out in a limited period of time. More comprehensive data might be collected in a longer period of time.

### Participation Limitations

- Participation has been limited as the questionnaire and focus group studies have been carried out on voluntary basis. More generalisable results might be obtained with a larger participation.

### Technical Difficulties

- Technical problems experienced during the online questionnaires and focus group meetings have delayed the data collection process from time to time.

### Psychological Effects

- Post-earthquake psychological effects are capable of affecting the consistency and accuracy of the replies given by the participants.

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## FINDINGS

### Findings Obtained in the Questionnaire Study (Quantitative Aspect)

#### Demographic Findings Regarding the Participants

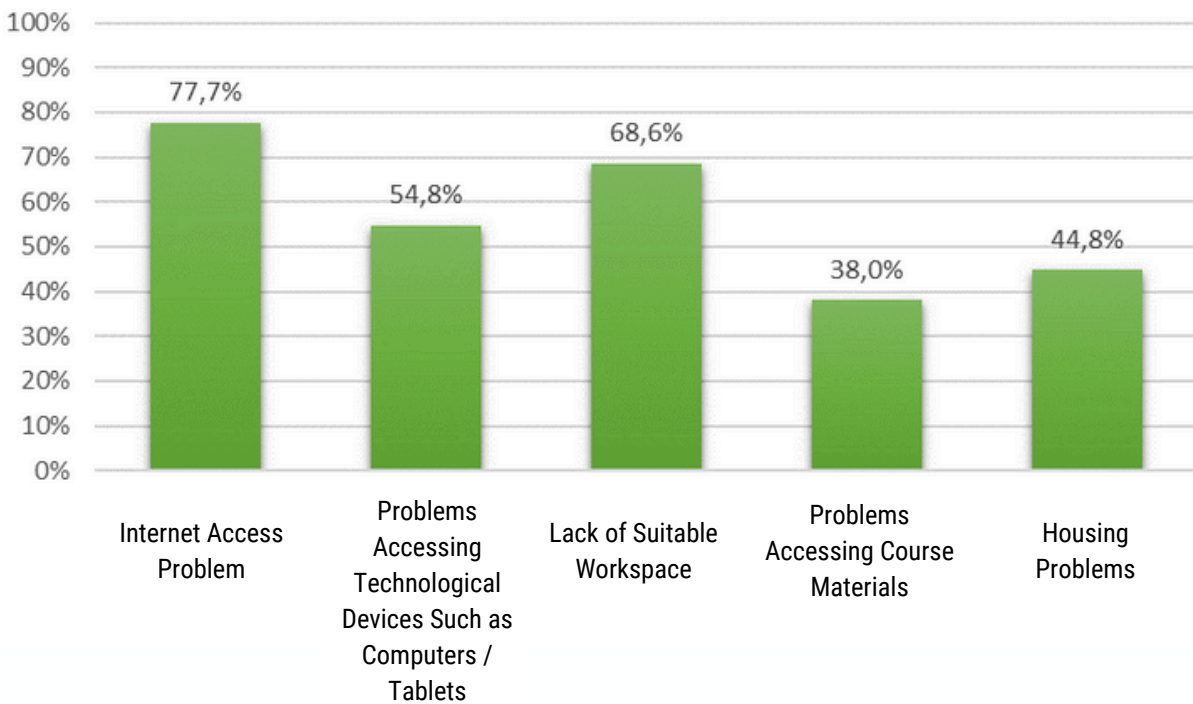
Under this heading, demographic and education-related data of the participants participating in the questionnaire study have been obtained. Fifty-four participants participating in the questionnaire replied the gender question as follows: 53,7% women, 40,7% men, 3,4% other and 2,2% "I do not want to state". This distribution of gender emphasises how important social gender perspectives are important in the post-disaster situations and that all should be represented equally. Of the participants, 64,4% are between 18-24 years of age, 27,6% between 25-29 years of age, 5,4% between 30-34 years of age and 2,6% between 35-39 years of age. The questionnaire has been replied by students of whom 63% attended the Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, 24% the İskenderun Technical University and 13%



the other universities in the earthquake area. While undergraduates constituted the majority (68,5%), graduates (25,9%) and postgraduates (5,6%) were also represented. It has not been possible to determine the participation of the foreign students, refugees, etc. as they are not included into the options. While the questionnaire was designed, this issue was overlooked, but we tried to eliminate the deficiency on the matter in the focus group study.

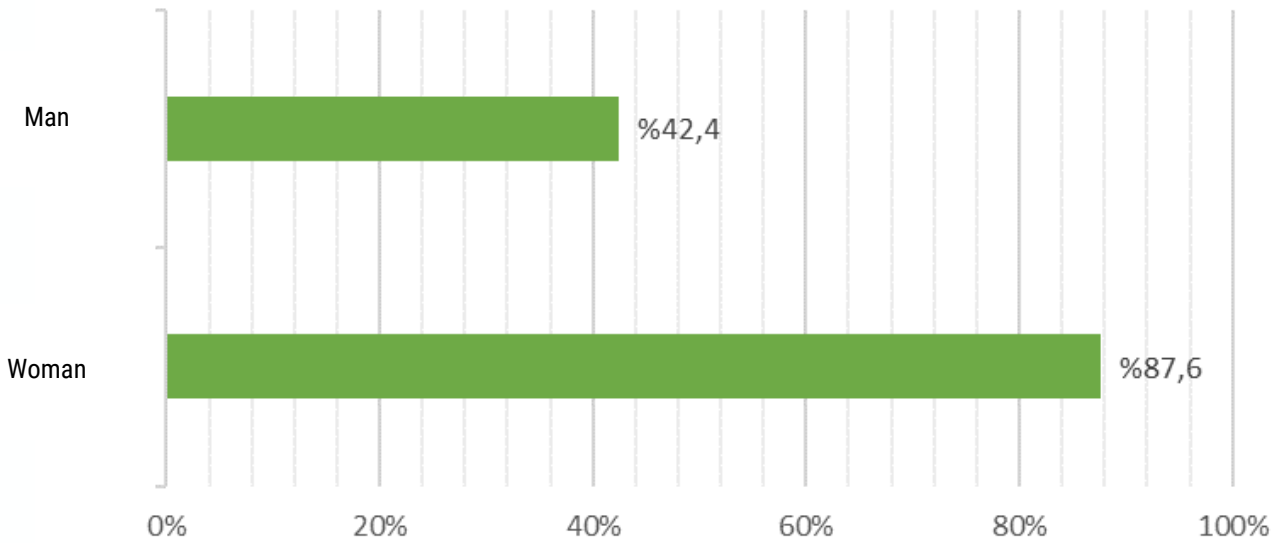
## Post-Earthquake Difficulties Encountered on Higher Education

Graph 1. The difficulties encountered by the participants



Data regarding the difficulties encountered by the participants are presented in Graph 1. Among the most prominent difficulties encountered by the participants participating in the questionnaire study, access to internet occupies the first place with 77,7 percent. Among the other major difficulties encountered in terms of access to higher education in Hatay after the earthquake, the lack of proper studying area (68,6%) and access to technological devices (54,8%) comes to the forefront. Every second participant encounters these three problems. Safe and stable sheltering problems (44,8%) come to the forefront as critical barriers for the continuity of education. And the problem of access to course materials is expressed as 38 percent. This shows the direct effect of the satisfaction of the post-disaster basic needs on the educational activities.

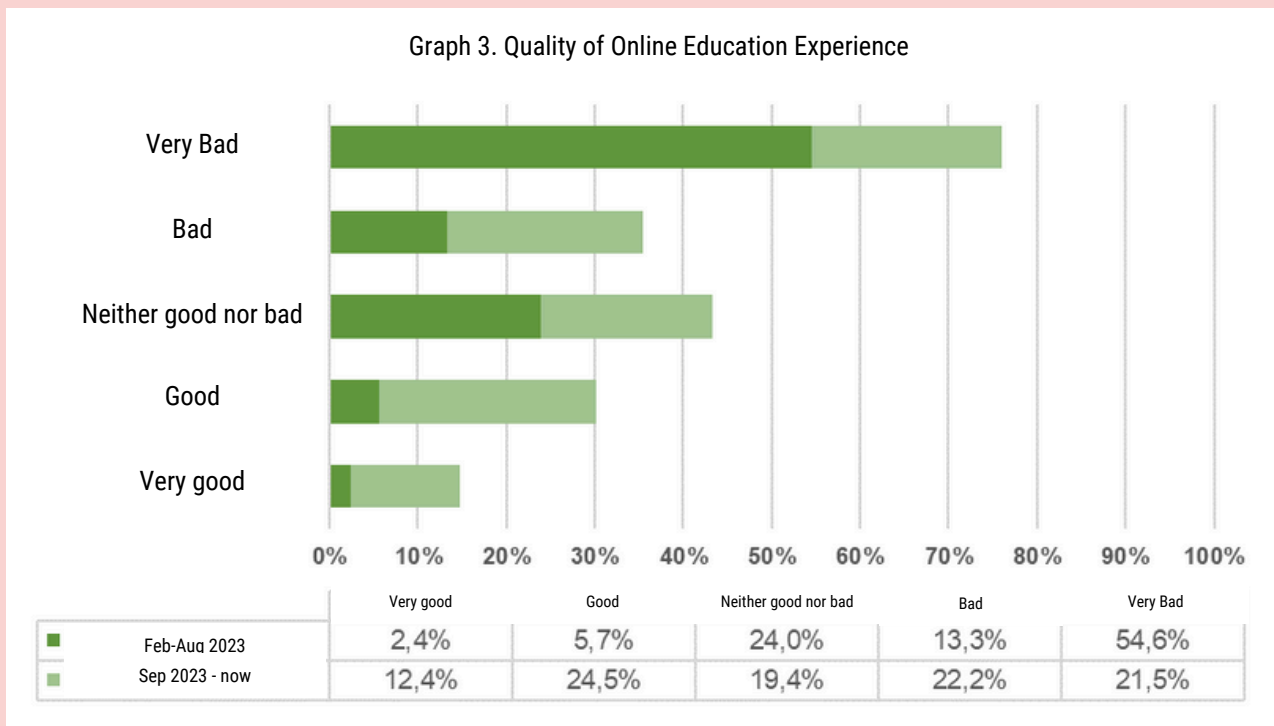
Graph 2. Stable Housing Problems and Lack of Suitable Work Problems According to Gender



Further, it has been found out that the issue of sheltering and proper studying conditions is mentioned more frequently by woman participants of the questionnaire. These two problems have been mentioned by 87,6% of the women while they have been mentioned by 42,4% of the men. Data on the issue are presented in Graph 2. Difficulties Encountered in Higher Education after the Earthquake

Data regarding the difficulties encountered by the participants are presented in Graph 1. Among the most prominent difficulties encountered by the participants participating in the questionnaire study, access to internet occupies the first place with 77,7 percent. Among the other major difficulties encountered in terms of access to higher education in Hatay after the earthquake, the lack of proper studying area (68,6%) and access to technological devices (54,8%) comes to the forefront. Every second participant encounters these three problems. Safe and stable sheltering problems (44,8%) come to the forefront as critical barriers for the continuity of education. And the problem of access to course materials is expressed as 38 percent. This shows the direct effect of the satisfaction of the post-disaster basic needs on the educational activities.

## Quality of Post-Earthquake Remote Education Experience



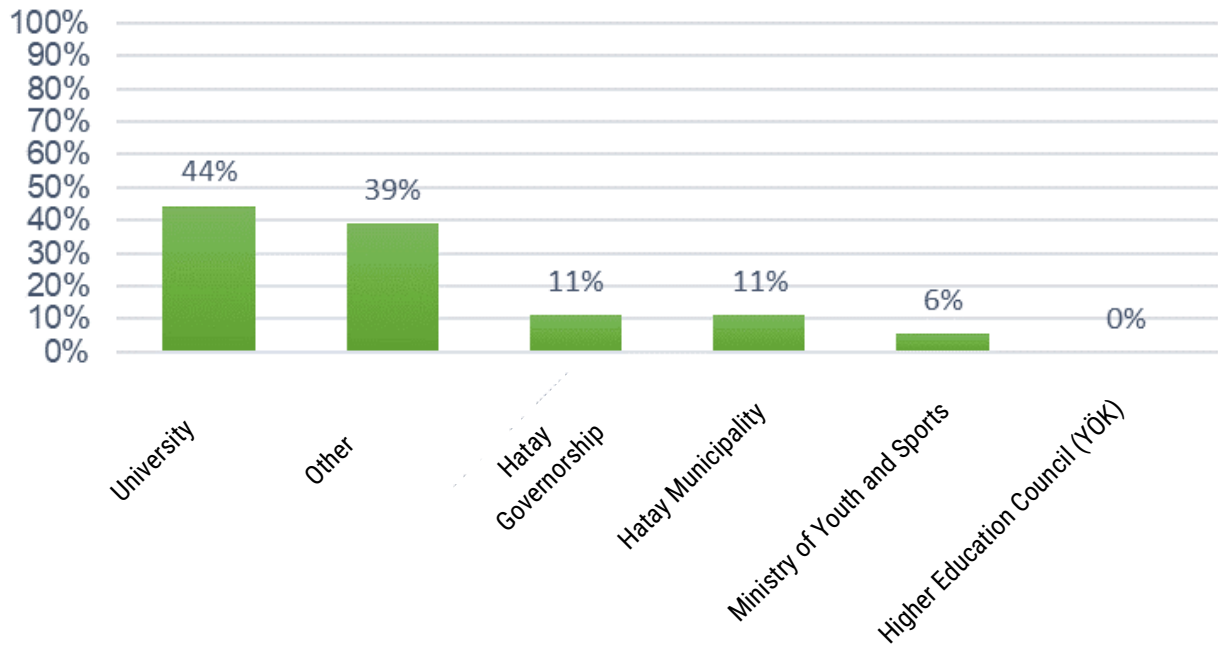
When one looks into Graph 3 in terms of the quality of the remote education experience, it may be said that 54,6% of the participants replied the quality of the post - earthquake remote education experience as “very bad” in the period of remote education covering the February- August 2023 immediately following the earthquake; but that this displayed an affirmative change by reducing to 21,5% in the period from September 2023 to the present day. While the rate of those who say that the quality of education was “very good” in the February - August 2023 period was only 2,4%, this rate rose to 12,4% after September 2023.

## Resources of Support and Aids Received

When one looks into Graph 4, universities (44%) and other governmental organisations come to the forefront among the resources of support; however, it may be said that supports especially associated with central administration (Ministry of Youth and Sports and YÖK) generally.

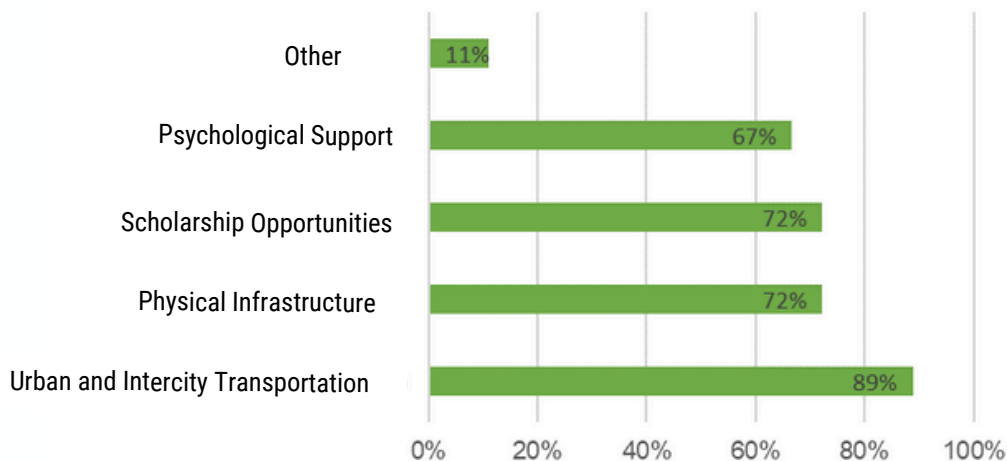
This underlines that the central administration should prioritise the educational services in the processes of disaster management. Inadequacy of the supports requires that more inclusive and accessible services should be provided in order to ensure especially the right to education in a proper manner.

Graph 4. Resources of Support and Aids Received



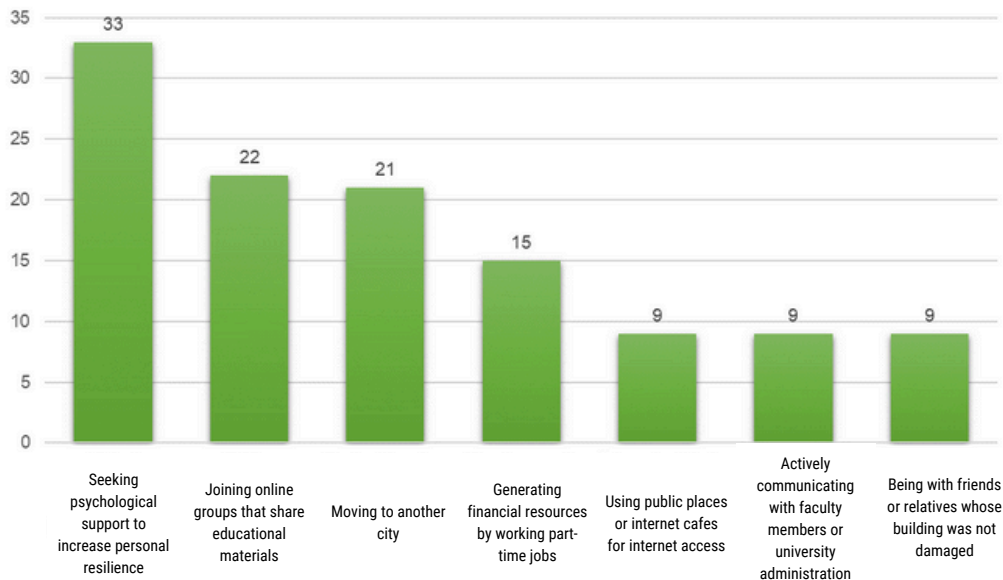
When one looks into Graph 5, the field which needs support most in access to higher education is local and intercity transportation (89%). For instance; while the failure to repair the highways by which intercity transportation shall be provided is an aspect that impedes transportation, ability to reach the universities and campuses in cities has also created a compelling field. It should be emphasised that significant responsibilities fall upon both the central administration and the local administration and the universities on the matter.

Graph 5. Areas where support is needed in accessing higher education



## Methods of Individually Coping with the General Problems Encountered in Access to Higher Education

Graph 6. Methods of Individually Coping with the General Problems Encountered in Access to Higher Education



When one looks into Graph 6, out of 54 individuals participating in the questionnaire, 33 individuals developed such individual strategies as post-disaster psychological support; 22 individuals joining in online groups sharing educational materials; 21 moving to another city and 15 providing financial resources. These solutions show that individuals sought solutions on their own and the importance of community solidarity. Further, the importance of the psychosocial supports to be provided in order to enhance the post-earthquake psychological endurance and of the online solidarity is a fact which should be emphasised.

### Findings from the Focus Group Study (Qualitative Aspect)

Opinions and suggestions of the participants with regard to the 4 headings dealt with in the focus group study are reflected below. And in the final part, suggestions compiled from the ideas and opinions put forward in the focus group meeting and an evaluation are available. While the expectations and solutions reflect a specific part of the focus group meeting, the suggestions and evaluation present a strategical perspective regarding the access to post- disaster higher education.

## General Problems Encountered in the Process of Higher Education

Under this heading, the participants have been asked the following questions: "What were the biggest problems you experienced in the post-earthquake period of education and what problems still persist? How did you experience the technological and material deficiencies in the post-earthquake remote and hybrid education? Do these deficiencies still persist?" While post-disaster access to education is included among the basic rights of students, the earthquake constituted significant barriers in the exercise of this right. This section details the said barriers and potential solutions from the perspective of different representatives. **Ayşe, representative of the Association Y**, said "One of the biggest problems which female students experienced was the gender inequality in access. Together with the earthquake, this inequality which had been already existed got deeper and deeper", thus emphasising that the existing inequalities got deeper and deeper in the post-earthquake period of education. On the other hand, the support mechanisms required for the women and especially young women may exercise their right to education in higher education become more important in the post-disaster situations. **Alihan, representative of the Association X**, said "Deficiencies of technical infrastructure restricted the students' access to online educational platforms. Even in the projects which we started in order to set up a study environment in Hatay, we continuously encountered internet problems.", thus expressing how the existing infrastructural deficiencies affected access to education.

On the other hand, digital transformation in education is a process which should be sped up in the post-disaster periods. On this matter, **Joseph, Representative of Foreign Students**, said "Among the difficulties brought about by the earthquake, we had difficulties in accessing to course materials in the languages used in higher education most.", thus mentioning the distress which he experienced in accessing to course materials. This shows that the higher education institutions should invest in multilingual educational materials.

There were supports provided by academic personnel in the post-disaster periods; however, such supports were presented on the basis of an individual effort and provision of corporate support was inadequate. With regard to this matter, **Ahmet, Birliktelyileşiyoruz participating academician**, said, "Adequate academic support could not be provided as to how to provide remote education so that students might continue their educational process. After the disaster, we, academicians, tried to reach the students with the resources at hand and to guide them so that they could continue their education."

Flexible and inclusive educational models and support systems prepared in advance for the post-disaster situations bear vital importance. On this matter, **Defne, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, expressed her need for the access to the university and the study environment in the aftermath of the earthquake as follows:

"After the earthquake, my biggest difficulty was failure to access the campus and the lack of a safe study environment. We, students, need a more supportive environment and resources so that we can continue our education."

**Doğa, a graduate**, drew attention to the importance of sharing knowledge and experience among students in the post-earthquake period with the following expressions: "Even after I graduated from the university, I kept observing the effects of the earthquake on education. Setting up mentorship relations between the graduates and the undergraduates and sharing our knowledge and experience helped a lot in this period."

Effective communication networks and information sharing platforms should be set up in order to support the educational community in the post-disaster situations. **Betül, a volunteering participant**, said, "While monitoring the developments in Hatay, I noticed how critical communication and information flow were.", thus emphasising the importance of the matter.


Briefly, in-depth analysis of the general problems encountered in the process of higher education emphasises that it is required to develop strategic approaches in order to protect and improve the right to access to higher education particularly in such extraordinary periods such as post-disaster periods.



## Problems of Access and Equality

Under this heading, the participants were asked the following questions: "What are the problems which you experienced in access to technology and internet in the post-earthquake period? How did such gender-based differences as being a woman, a man, a LGBTI+ affect your access to education during and after the earthquake?". It may be said that the equality problems in access to higher education made the opportunity inequality among the students more evident. Experience and opinions of the participants show the reasons and solutions for such inequalities in access to education. The earthquake further deepened the inequalities basing upon social gender. **Ayşe, representative of the Association Y**, said, "The earthquake further aggravated the existing barriers of access for the female students and minority groups basing upon social gender. Besides emergency actions, it is compulsory to develop long-term supportive programmes intended for the needs of these groups." **Alihan, representative of the Association X**, emphasised the internet requirements of the disadvantaged students and said,





Limitations of technical infrastructure prevent all students from having just and equal access to the educational materials.

*"Limitations of technical infrastructure prevent all students from having just and equal access to the educational materials. In particular, investment should be made in innovative solutions such as mobile access points for those students living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods."*

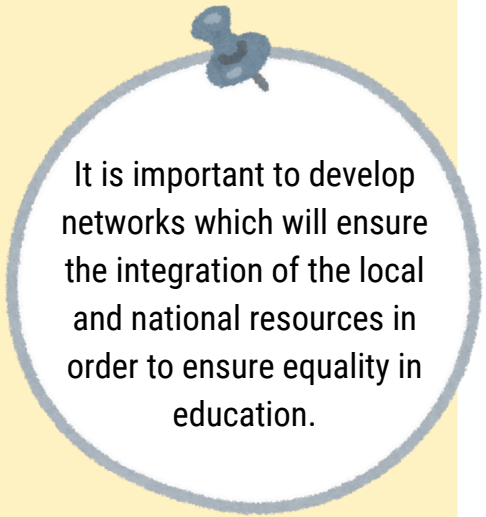
Emphasising the need for multilingual approach in education, **Joseph, representative of foreign students**, said, *"Language handicaps constitutes so great an access problem for international students. It is required to strengthen the multilingual approaches in education and enhance the*

*services of language support."* Saying, *"Course materials made tailored for disabled students and for individuals with special educational needs and accessible educational platforms should be created in order to ensure equality in education."* **Ahmet, Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Participating Academician**, emphasised the provision of accessibility of resources for the students in the vulnerable group.

**Özlem, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, expressed that mobile stations and learning centres are required for mitigating the effect of the damage suffered by study areas in the earthquake on the students in the following manner: *"What we needed most after the earthquake was safe and accessible study areas. Such areas as libraries and laboratories were damaged and this adversely affected our studies and researches. My suggestion is to create temporary learning centres supported with mobile study stations and mass finance."* **Onur, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, made suggestions that technological resources might be used for the practical requirements of the department where he was studying and expressed this in the following manner: *"It has particularly become difficult to maintain education in such departments as engineering requiring practice. Simulation of practical subjects by using such technologies as virtual reality and augmented reality may make a big difference in this field."*

**Cihan, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, emphasised the requirement for improvement and standardisation related to the contents of the online courses after the earthquake by saying, *"The contents and quality of the online courses presented to us after the earthquake have varied a lot particularly in remote education. Standardisation of the quality of education and additional education intended for the academicians lecturing on online platforms may ensure the students to enjoy a better learning experience."* And **Defne, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, expressed the fact that the facilities for equal access to education should also contain the academic and psychosocial aspect in the following manner: *"Development of the in-campus and online access facilities may provide us students with a wide learning area. Equitable access should not be limited to technology but cover the academic and social support services as well."*

**Graduate Doğa** considers the experience transfer by graduates on the achievement of access and equality to be important and says as follows: *"We, university graduate, may take a more active part in mentoring the undergraduates and providing them with resources. Platforms which will facilitate the graduates to share their experiences."* And **Betül, a voluntary participant**, thinks that common networks should be developed in the solution of the problems encountered on access and equality and expresses this in the following manner: *"It is important to develop networks which will ensure the integration of the local and national resources in order to ensure equality in education."*



It is important to develop networks which will ensure the integration of the local and national resources in order to ensure equality in education.

Briefly, opinions and suggestions of the participants emphasise that while dealing with the problems of equality in access in higher education, it is required to take into consideration various factors such as gender inequality, socioeconomic and geographical barriers, language and cultural barriers, disability and special learning needs. In order to mitigate the inequalities in access to education, this shows that, besides technological developments, social and pedagogical supports should be dealt with in an integrated approach and solutions compliant with the requirements of each student group.

## Supports and Resources


Under this heading, the participants were asked the following questions: *"Were there any institutions or organisations to support you immediately after the earthquake? From what institutions or organisations are you getting or would like to get support at the moment? What kinds of supports and resources did you need so that you could continue your education immediately after the earthquake? What kinds of supports and resources do you need so that you can continue your education at present?"* It has been confirmed by the opinions and suggestions of the participants that the provision of supports and resources in higher education has vital importance for the students' access to education and sustainability of their academic achievement after the disaster. For instance, **Ayşe, representative of the Association Y**, mentioned that programmes and support services regarding the needs of the women in terms of social gender are required in the following manner: *"In cases of emergency, it is required to increase the supports intended for female students and to satisfy their specific needs. Specially designed programmes and psychological support services which will facilitate women's access to education should be created."*

**Alihan, representative of the Association X**, emphasised that a solution might be found and resources created when such different actors as the public and private sectors, etc. would come together. *"We aim at providing students with technical and material support and allow them to continue their education without a hitch. And to do this, it is required to invest in innovative financing methods and educational technologies. Cooperation of the public and private sectors and non-governmental organisations should*

be brought to the forefront. The public sector is strong but not flexible and the private sector holds finance but does not have operational power; and the non-governmental organisations are operational but has problems of financing and power of sanction. Therefore, rapid solutions may be achieved when they come together."

**Joseph, representative of Foreign Students**, emphasised the access to educational materials and resources for the international students and said, "Access to multilingual support systems and intercultural educational materials may make a big difference for the international students. Besides

scholarships and financial aids, consultancy services intended for students should be extended. Mentoring programmes will also play a psychosocial support role." **Ahmet, Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Participating Academician**, expressed in the following manner that career consultancy should be included into the post-earthquake educational periods: "In order to continue the educational process, mentoring and career consultancy services as well as academic and technological supports bear importance. In the aftermath of disaster, it is critical to integrate such services and made them accessible."



Access to multilingual support systems and intercultural educational materials may make a big difference for the international students.

And the opinions of **Özlem, Onur and Cihan, students of the Mustafa Kemal University** are respectively the following: "Particularly, the inconveniences experienced in sheltering, transport and basic life needs are as important as the education-oriented problems. Supports provided to satisfy such basic needs are indispensable for the continuity of our educational processes."; "We can solve the problems experienced in access to laboratories and workshops required for our practical courses with virtual laboratory practices and online simulations."; "It is necessary to improve the online platforms which will increase the quality and accessibility of the educational contents. Further, academicians should be provided with training on the online educational systems."

**Doğa, a graduate**, underlines the fact that graduates should be given responsibilities in order to support the students attending their education at present in the following manner: "We, who have just graduated from the university, should do whatever we can in order to guide the present students and to support them in the career planning. In the period, a mentoring network may be set up by making use of the experience of the graduates." **Betül, a voluntary participant**, mentioned the need for improving the remote education platforms and presenting psychological support in the following manner: "Improving the remote education platforms and making them interactive may provide the students with a better experience in education. Further, there is a great need for post-disaster psychological support services as well."

Briefly, the opinions and suggestions of the participants show that the supports and resources with which the students should be provided in the post-disaster period of higher education are not comprised of financial aids only. Moreover, the requirement for designing an integrated support system to cover the academic, social and psychological needs of the students is also emphasised. Suggestions of each participant present valuable insights on the diversification and individualisation of the supports to be provided in higher education in the aftermath of the disaster.


## **Solution Suggestions and Expectations of the Participants**

Under this heading, the participants were asked the following questions: *"How did you personally solve your problems of accessing to higher education? What are your expectations from the governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations in terms of accessing to higher education?"*. Comprehensive suggestions and expectations presented by the participants in order to generate sustainable and effective solutions for the problems encountered by the participants in the post-disaster period of higher education constitute the focal point of this section.

**Ayşe, representative of Association Y**, mentions her suggestion for creating support packages in which the conditions are adjusted in favour of women for ensuring social gender equality in the following manner: *"In order to remove the barriers which female students encounter in higher education, comprehensive support packages in which special scholarship programmes, flexible education times and child care services are included in the post-disaster conditions are a must."*

**Alihan, representative of Association X**, expresses that a suggestion for a disaster-resistant model is required in the following manner: *"We suggest that technological infrastructures which will speed up the digital transformation in education and satisfy the requirements of all students are to be established. At the same time, investment should be made in researches intended for the development of disaster-resistant educational models as well."*

**Joseph, representative of foreign students**, states in the following manner that disasters affect people from all sectors and that common solutions should be generated for the problems all together: *"Multilingual guidance and support services which will ensure the international students to easily adapt to the educational processes are required. Further, programmes which will encourage intercultural interaction should be developed so that one may keep in mind that disasters affect everyone and that not only peoples in a disaster area but also people from other cultures and countries who live there are affected thereby and that solutions should be generated all together."*



**Ahmet, a Birlikte İyileşiyoruz Participating Academician**, points out mentoring programmes as a solution, saying, "Academic mentoring programmes supported with online and hybrid educational models should be presented as a solution for the problems of accessing to higher education in the post-disaster period. In this way, it may be possible to allow the students to access to both theoretical information and practical skills. Nevertheless, these programmes may further offer a possibility for psychosocial support. Ofcourse, academicians should be educated and trained on both digital instruments and digital methods and the matter of psychosocial support issue."

**Defne, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, emphasises in the following manner that satisfaction of such problems of transport and sheltering is an aspect which affects the process of education for solution: "Satisfaction of such basin needs as transport and sheltering ensures us to focus on education. Investments to be made on this matter will directly affect our academic achievement." **Onur, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, emphasises the importance of the technological solutions intended for ensuring the continuity of education in the post-disaster period in the following manner: "Moving the laboratory utilities to the virtual environment may facilitate education in such applied sciences as engineering. Continuity of post-disaster education may be ensured through these types of technological solutions."

**Cihan, a student of the Mustafa Kemal University**, emphasises the fact that the contents and quality of the courses should be improved in addition to technological solutions in the following manner: "Collaboration of the universities and the educational technology providers is vital for accessible educational contents of good quality. It is required to diversify the course contents and improve the quality standards."

**Doğa, a graduate**, emphasised the fact that programmes in which graduates may act as mentors in terms of the post-earthquake period in the following manner: "Programmes by which graduates may convey their experience may be developed in the post-disaster recovery period. Graduates may mentor the present students, thus supporting their educational processes." Finally, **Betül, voluntary participant**, emphasised that programmes which would strengthen the psychosocial wellness states of the students as well as the social solidarity were required in the following phrases: "Programmes which will strengthen psychological support and social solidarity should be kept in the forefront within the scope of disaster management. Psychosocial wellness of students is the keystone of achievement in education."



# OVERALL EVALUATION AND SUGGESTIONS

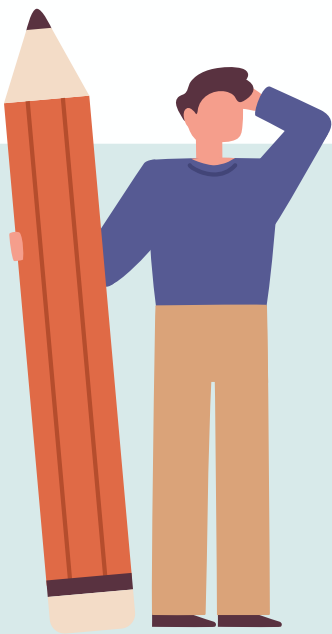
Important points identified as a result of the evaluation of the data obtained from the quantitative and qualitative aspect within the scope of the study are the following:

- In the post-earthquake period, students encounter such problems as technological difficulties, access to internet, lack of technical infrastructure, failure to reach educational materials in connection with access to higher education. In accordance with the Sendai principles, higher education institutions may carry out surveys on the risk reduction and develop innovative solutions in disasters. Studies may be carried out in such areas as earthquake engineering, disaster management and emergency planning. It has critical importance to rapidly put into use any support mechanisms for the students and academic personnel who have been affected by the disaster so that their educational process will continue without disruption. This includes the provision of any infrastructures and supports required for ensuring the continuity of educational services in post-earthquake situations.

- Female students encounter more with difficulties on the lack of shelter and proper study area. There is social gender inequality in accessing to resources. However, the article 10 of CEDAW aims at guaranteeing women's equal access to and opportunities for education. This article covers the women's access to higher education as well. In this context, provision of programmes and support services intended for ensuring social gender equality are needed.



- The quality of the remote education experience in higher education increased in the period from February-August 2023 and September 2023-present day. Remote education process is a dynamic process which may improve, be updated over time and is open to change. It is a requirement to plan



provide psychosocial support rapidly and present temporary educational solutions.

this process well and to make regulations which will improve the quality and accessibility. When one looks into it in terms of the General Interpretation No. 13 of the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee, it is an important requirement that the states take any necessary measures in order to accomplish the right to education. In order to protect the right to access to higher education in the aftermath of the 6th February earthquakes, the state should rebuild the educational infrastructure, to

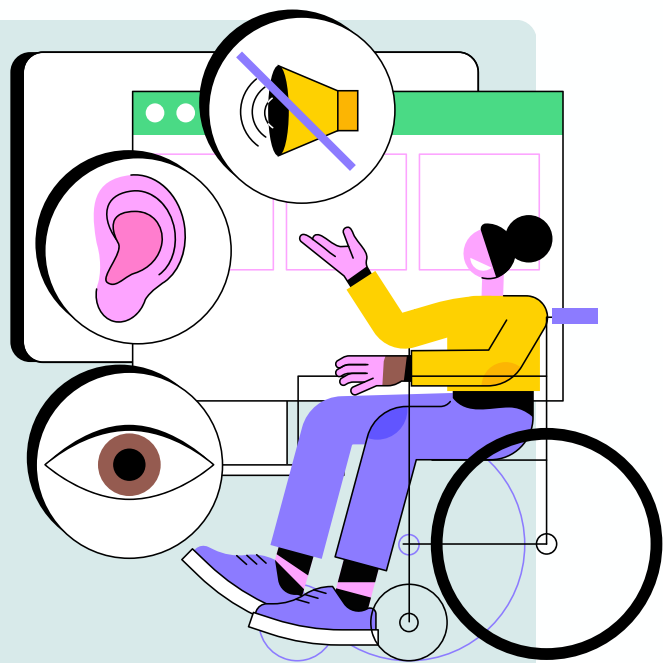
- Participants of this study consider universities to be the greatest resource of support; nevertheless, it may be generally said that especially those supports related with the central administration (Ministry of Youth and Sports and Council of Higher Education) remain inadequate. It is an important requirement that universities, public and private sectors collaborate and provide students with resources and support services. Students' failure to continue their education due to financial impossibilities in access to higher education should be taken into consideration. Such precautions as scholarship programmes, tuition exemptions and special term examinations have a vital importance in order to support this process and such processes should be monitored and reported by non-governmental organisations.

- The area in which support is needed most is the transport and access to the campus. There are a great number of different corporations and organisations working at local, national and international levels in the region. And this leads to chaos. In the processes of restructuring the disaster risk management and education sector, effective and synchronised cooperation and coordination should be established among educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, government and local administrations and processes of governance should be run in a multilateral manner and efforts should be made to solve such problems.

- Seeking psychological support for enhancing personal endurance has been the most frequently encountered method of coping. Such supportive services as mentoring, career consultancy and psychosocial consultancy intended for students should be structured. From the students' perspective, provision of academic and psychosocial supports is considered to be important for achievement in overcoming any problems encountered. Besides psychosocial supports

is considered to be important for achievement in overcoming any problems encountered. Besides psychosocial support programmes intended for students, strengthening of academic supports and guidance services is important to satisfy both emotional and academic needs of students in the post-disaster recovery period. Therefore, it is critically important to ensure continuity of the guidance services without disruption.

- On the issue of access and equality, accessible learning platforms and mobile learning centres compliant with the special needs of the handicapped students are needed. Further, it is important to take into consideration the fact that students from different cultures and countries have also been affected by disasters. To make educational programmes and facilities accessible for everyone and inclusive bears a vital importance particularly for disadvantaged groups, handicapped individuals and communities especially affected by disasters. This should include taking into consideration gender equality, multilingualism and special education needs.



- Suggestions for disaster-resistant models which will ensure digital transformation should be created in order to eliminate inequalities of opportunity in access to resources in higher education. In order to increase the higher education institutions' resistance to disasters and achieve the goals of the Quality Education (Goal 4) and Social Gender equality (Goal 5) included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, national (such as the Constitution, legal regulations and policies as well as contributions from non-governmental organisations and private sector) and international (such as UN Programmes and Funds, International Cooperations, Conferences and Global Educational Partnerships) support mechanisms should be benefited. Sendai Principles emphasise that the society should understand the risks of disaster and educated on the matter. Higher education institutions should present educational programmes on disaster management and risk mitigation and try to enhance this consciousness.

- In the post-disaster period, provision of access to higher education plays a critical role in restructuring the societies in a more equitable, inclusive and resistant manner. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obliges the states to protect the right to





education and to ensure this right to be accomplished. This means that states are required to take any and all precautions in order to ensure access to education in the post-disaster period. These precautions may include such steps as repairing the school buildings, setting up temporary centres of education, providing transport and providing students with psychological support. However, this process should not only be limited to the rebuilding of the physical infrastructure but include any attempts which will ensure students to be able to continue their education without disruption and any strategical approaches intended for encouraging social justice and equality as well.

Consequently, there are such areas of problems as coordination, right-based approach, access to materials, etc. which should be dealt with within the context of access to right to education in higher education in the aftermath of disaster. At this point, approaches which will be restructured on the basis of the rights to access to higher education of students are required. Moreover, there are deficiencies in the mechanisms which will evaluate and track such efforts.



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