



## UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OPINIONS REGARDING POVERTY IN TURKEY <sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*In this study, it is aimed to determine university students opinions regarding poverty. The study group consisted of 222 1th-4th year students studying at Kilis 7 Aralık University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Ondokuz Mayıs University Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Divinity, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ankara University Faculty of Health Science, Gazi University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Technology, Faculty of Arts in Spring 2014-2015 academic year. There were 115 female students and 107 male students who participated in the study. In this study, University Students' Views Regarding Poverty. Poverty Form were developed by the researcher in order to determine the views of university students. The study is a descriptive type of study. These forms consisted of 10 open ended questions related to the students' views about poverty. The answers given to the 10 open ended questions in the form were combined and gathered under common headers. The study is a descriptive type of study. The results of this study find that the opinions of university students regarding poverty include, person's laziness results would be poverty and constant struggle for living and do try to read against all odds.*

Keywords: university students; poverty; student views

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## Introduction

Poverty is simply defined as the absence of a minimum standard of living that would meet basic human needs. Contemporary poverty is the result of various macro and micro factors. Globalization, unemployment, global capital, economic crises and migration are among the major macro factors. Amongst others, micro factors include a lack of education, lack of capacity, a culture of poverty, and individual characteristics. Poverty creates problems such as social exclusion, violence, crime and gender discrimination (Acikgoz & Yusufoglu, 2012; Topgul, 2013). According to World Bank reports, one in five people in the world live below the poverty line (Kulaksız, 2014). In an attempt to describe poverty more accurately many concepts and distinctions have been used: absolute vs. relative poverty, objective vs. subjective poverty, income vs. humanitarian poverty, rural vs. urban poverty, the working poor, and female poverty. Among the most human basic rights are the right to life, the right to freedom, and the right to a healthy life, which includes access to healthcare, education, nutrition, shelter and social services. The global problem of poverty threatens all of these rights. This is especially true for women, who are among the disadvantaged groups that suffer poverty disproportionately (Gersil, 2015). Lower levels of participation in the labor force, limited educational opportunities, traditional gender roles, social expectations, existing role models and lack of time for gainful employment, prevent women from enjoying their human rights to the fullest extent. All of these factors aggravate and reproduce female poverty over generations (Gersil, 2015; Topgul, 2013).

Poor, fragmented families, on the other hand, experience more severe poverty and other social problems. These families also suffer from highest levels of social exclusion (Yusufoglu & Kızmaz, 2016). Micro-funding is a method that can be used to alleviate global poverty. With minimal funding and financial resources, poor people, particularly women, have a chance to establish businesses and escape from poverty, and achieve economic independence and self-confidence (Altay, 2007; Ates & Ogutogulları, 2012).

## Objective

Poverty plays a crucial role in their behaviours during life. One of the biggest obstacles to an individual's social existence is poverty. In this light, this study aims to identify the opinions of university students regarding poverty.

## **Method**

The studies aiming to define a situation, which already exists or existed in the past, are studies designed according to scanning model (Karasar, 2003). In this study, an existing situation was analysed since the study aims to determine the views of university students on poverty. Therefore, this study is a patterned research designed according to scanning model.

### *Participants*

In this study, it is aimed to determine the views of university students regarding poverty. The study group consisted of 222 1th-4th year students studying at Kilis 7 Aralık University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Ondokuz Mayıs University Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Divinity, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ankara University Faculty of Health Science, Gazi University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Technology, Faculty of Arts in Spring 2014-2015 academic year. The number of female students participating in the study was 115 (51.80%) and the number of male students participating in the study was 107 (48.20%).

### *Research instrument*

“University Students’ Views Regarding Poverty” was developed in order to determine the views of university students poverty. These forms consist of ten open ended questions to determine their views about poverty.

### *The analysis of the data*

The answers given to the ten open ended questions in the form were combined and gathered under common headings. Frequencies and percentages calculated.

## **Results**

### *Results Regarding University Students’ Perception of Poverty*

In this section, you can see the frequency and percentage distributions according to the answers given to the items in the “University Students’ Views Regarding Poverty”.

Table 1. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding poverty symptoms

| Opinions  | n  | %     |
|---|----|-------|
| Unhealthy food and inability to feed enough                               | 88 | 39.64 |
| To have not the assurance that it will address the concern for the future | 51 | 22.97 |
| Not enough to benefit from the educational and health facilities          | 42 | 18.92 |

As seen in Table 1, 40% of the students mentioned “unhealthy food and inability to feed enough” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 19% of the students mentioned “not enough to benefit from the educational and health facilities” as the least important characteristics.

Table 2. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding first performed the behavior when poor person seen

| Opinions                           | n  | %     |
|------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Ignore                             | 58 | 26.13 |
| Give money                         | 57 | 25.68 |
| Grouch                             | 54 | 24.32 |
| Report to the relevant authorities | 53 | 23.87 |

As seen in Table 2, 26% of the students mentioned “ignore” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 24% of the students mentioned “report to the relevant authorities” as the least important characteristics.

Table 3. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding poverty alleviation

| Opinions   | n  | %     |
|--|----|-------|
| Finding the money made in the labor market                   | 83 | 37.39 |
| Psychological counseling and implementation of job placement | 74 | 33.33 |
| Increasing the education level                               | 65 | 29.28 |

As seen in Table 3, 37% of the students mentioned “finding the money made in the labor market” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 29% of the students mentioned “increasing the education level” as the least important characteristics.

Table 4. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding poverty culture determinants

| Opinions                       | n   | %     |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Constant struggle for living   | 126 | 56.76 |
| Extremely low power purchasing | 96  | 43.24 |

As seen in Table 4, 57% of the students mentioned “constant struggle for living” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 43% of the students mentioned “extremely low power purchasing” as the least important characteristics.

Table 5. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding poverty's feminisation

| Opinions  | n  | %     |
|---|----|-------|
| The lack of women's participation rate in the labor force | 62 | 27.93 |
| Dependent situation arose as a result                     | 61 | 27.48 |
| Women take much less share of global wealth               | 60 | 27.03 |
| Condition resulting from a woman's education level        | 39 | 17.56 |

As seen in Table 5, 28% of the students mentioned “the lack of women's participation rate in the labor force” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 18% of the students mentioned “condition resulting from a woman's education level” as the least important characteristics.

Table 6. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding why poor people happens? The answer to the question

| Opinions   | n   | %     |
|--|-----|-------|
| Person's laziness results would be poverty         | 138 | 62.16 |
| People are poor because it came from a poor family | 84  | 37.84 |

As seen in Table 6, 62% of the students mentioned “person's laziness results would be poverty” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 38% of the students mentioned “people are poor because it came from a poor family” as the least important characteristics.

Table 7. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding children of poor families are the reason the crime orientation

| Opinions  | n  | %     |
|---|----|-------|
| Social, cultural and sports activities they cannot find the opportunity | 74 | 33.33 |
| Abort their training  | 74 | 33.33 |
| They unable to find work  | 74 | 33.33 |

As seen in Table 7, 33% of the students mentioned “social, cultural and sports activities they cannot find the opportunity to” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 33% of the students mentioned “they unable to find work” as the least important characteristics.

Table 8. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding why are the people of being poor

| Opinions                    | n   | %     |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| Inability to find work      | 100 | 45.05 |
| To not work                 | 75  | 33.78 |
| Physical and mental illness | 47  | 21.17 |

As seen in Table 8, 45% of the students mentioned “inability to find work” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 21% of the students mentioned “physical and mental illness” as the least important characteristics.

Table 9. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding education of poor families’ children

| Opinions  | n   | %     |
|---|-----|-------|
| Difficulty in meeting the educational expenses      | 118 | 53.15 |
| Education interrupt and taking children from school | 57  | 25.68 |
| Recourse to social welfare institutions             | 47  | 21.17 |

As seen in Table 9, 53% of the students mentioned “difficulty in meeting the educational expenses” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 21% of the students mentioned “recourse to social welfare institutions” as the least important characteristics.

Table 10. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding study of poor families’ children

| Opinions                        | n   | %     |
|---------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Do try to read against all odds | 123 | 55.41 |
| Home run away from school       | 99  | 44.59 |

As seen in Table 10, 55% of the students mentioned “do try to read against all odds” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 45% of the students mentioned “home run away from school” as the least important characteristics.

### Discussion

The list of reasons for resorting to poverty as listed according to the opinions of university students are as follows, according to priority: Person’s laziness results would be poverty (138), constant struggle for living (126), do try to read against all odds (123), difficulty in meeting the educational expenses

(118), inability to find work (100), unhealthy food and inability to feed enough (88), finding the money made in the labor market (83), social, cultural and sports activities they can not find the opportunity to (74), the lack of women's participation rate in the labor force (62), and ignore (58)'dir. When compared with adults, children are at a higher risk of facing poverty and its negative effects. Children in poverty find it difficult to pursue an education, and become part of the informal labor force. Poverty is the main reason behind high rates of childhood illness and death (Altıparmak, 2008; Kulaksız, 2014). In this respect, the findings of Altıparmak (2008) and Kulaksız (2014) provide indirect support to the findings of the present study, specifically regarding the constant struggle for survival, having difficulty in affording educational expenses, unhealthy and insufficient nutrition, and the lack of access to social, cultural and sports activities. Another finding of the present study, that women have a lower rate of participation in the labor force, is supported by the studies of Gersil (2015) and Topgul (2013). In the fight against poverty, economic development, investing in human capital, participation, and striking the correct balance between economy and environment are particularly important. In addition, stability in international economic relations and improving institutional capacity are other policies that could help to alleviate poverty (Uzun, 2003). As a result of this, the findings of the present study, regarding poor families that make every effort to provide a good education for their children, is supported by those of Uzun (2003).

### Conclusions

As a result, university student opinions in terms of poverty, namely; person's laziness results would be poverty, constant struggle for living, do try to read against all odds, difficulty in meeting the educational expenses, inability to find work, unhealthy food and inability to feed enough, finding the money made in the labor market, social, cultural and sports activities they can not find the opportunity to, and the lack of women's participation rate in the labor force. In conclusion, poverty affects the family, finances, education and social life of a university student. The research is limited by the sample group that is being studied in this research. Future studies should be performed with different sample groups, which will contribute to the literature and help assess whether the results of the present study were valid.

Some recommendations for future studies are as follows:

1. Guidance services, particularly in schools, should identify students in poverty, and take the necessary measures to ensure that they get maximum benefits from their education.
2. Guidance services in schools can provide support by learning about the living conditions of these students' families, and sharing this information with the relevant agencies and organizations.
3. Similar studies into the effects of cultural factors on the poverty can be conducted in different cultures.

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