

Attitudes of International Students towards Turkish Foods

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ABSTRACT The aim of the paper is to determine the attitudes of international students towards Turkish foods. The present research was carried out on students educated in Turkish in Gazi University, Turkish Learning Application and Research Center (TOMER) in Ankara. Since the number of international students is limited, the research is performed on all the students. Out of the total 212 students, 50 students from the Turkish Republics, 68 students from the Middle East, 38 students from the Balkan countries, 26 students from Africa and 30 students from East Asia participated in the research on voluntary basis. During the research it was noticed that among students who prepare their own food at home or dorms, female students from Turkey preferred preparing food more than male students from same place ($p < .05$). The reason that female students' attitudes are more positive than male students' attitudes on the "inquisitiveness about new food" subscale is that females are typically more curious and interested in foods of different countries ($p < .05$).

INTRODUCTION

Due to the effect of globalization, cultural interactions have also occurred in foods cultures as well as social rules, languages, religion etc. (Seo et al. 2013). Each country in the world has its own unique foods and eating habits. As an instance, while insects and reptiles are consumed regularly in the East Asian countries (Pelchat and Pliner 1995), in western cultures, consumption of insects or dog meat is not welcomed (Martins and Pliner 2005). In other cultures, horse and pork meat are consumed on a regular basis (Kiroglu et al. 2010; Faure et al. 2013).

In Chinese culture, foods that are undercooked, spicy, sour, salty, bitter or sweet may be served on the same plate. It is also seen that Syrian and Albanian foods are also influenced by Middle Eastern foods, Arabic foods are influenced by Moroccan foods, and Balkan countries and Turkish food seems to be influenced by other world food (Halici 1986; Tezcan 2000; Savkay 2000). In a research conducted by Arslan (2010) on international tourists visiting Turkey on the issue of established thought that Turkish foods are delicious and healthy, but meals are prepared with too much sauce and fat. According to the study carried out, international students were having problems in nutrition and important changes were occurring in their environment and life styles (Ergin and Turk 2010). In other researches performed on international students, it is stressed that international students experience loneliness, inadaptability, shyness, cultural shocks, psychological prob-

lems and nutritional problems (Acikalin et al. 1996; Furnham 1997; Biggs 1999; Tomich et al. 2000). Kiroglu et al. 2010 state that international students in Turkey do not experience nutritional problems since they have relatives or friends in Turkey and the richness of Turkish foods also contributes to resolving the issue to a great extent.

Turkish foods have developed and prospered as a result of the previous civilizations settled in Turkey. By and large, Turkish foods and western foods have also influenced each other (Baysal 1993a). It is also indicated that Turkish foods are one of the three most well-known foods in the world and it is the best in terms of nutritional value, health and sophistication (Arlı 1982; Akman and Mete 1998; Baysal 2001). The historical development of Turkish food has marked its presence in Central Asia and it has emerged as a rich cuisine, thanks to the composition of meat and fermented dairy products of nomadic Central Asian people, cereals of Mesopotamia, vegetables and fruits of Mediterranean and spices of South Asia (Baysal 1993b). A variety of geographical climate and cultural characteristics also contributed in the differentiation of Turkish foods. Court kitchen and local kitchen difference derived from the palaces and common public homes are explained by the socio-economic differentiation (Savkay 2000; Bulduk and Suren 2009). Besides regional differences, local products and cultural perceptions are united with the Turkish public cuisine.

The present paper is important because it reveals the views of students from international cultures on food in the Turkish foods, and it

takes its place among studies on world foods about the perceptions and attitude towards Turkish food on an international level. Being a student is a stage in life that has limitations materially and morally. Especially in Ankara, there are limitations on encountering cultural food from different countries. Hence the attitudes of students towards Turkish foods gain importance. For this reason the research is conducted to determine attitude of international students' towards Turkish foods.

METHODOLOGY

Samples

The population of the paper is consisted of students from various countries who are educated in different departments and learning Turkish at Gazi University, Turkish Learning Application and Research Center (TOMER) in Ankara, Turkey. The sample includes the whole population since the number of students is limited. The research is performed on 212 students who agreed to participate voluntarily. Out of these students, 50 of the participants were from Turkish Republics, 68 of them were from Middle East, 38 of them were from the Balkan countries, 26 of them were from Africa and 30 of them were from East Asian countries. There were 80 female participants, while 132 of them were males and the average age was $M_{age}=22.3$. The participants were aged between 19 and 30. Duration of residency was one year for 154 of participants and two years for 58 of the participants.

Measurement Tools

In this descriptive paper "Attitude towards Turkish Foods Scale (ATTFS)" and "Advanced Personal Information Form" is used as data collection tools.

Demographics Form

There are questions about students' nationality, age, sex and duration of their residency in this country in this form.

Attitude Towards Turkish Foods Scale (ATTFS)

Taste habits of individuals are generally at traditional levels and they progress towards becoming inquisitive about new flavors as they

come across them. Also, they become open to new tastes with the effect of the increase in new flavors and familiarity of a culture or food (Fischler 1988; Stein et al. 2003; Luckow et al. 2006). For this reason these phases are taken into account during the development of the measurement tool.

The scale on international students' attitudes towards Turkish food is developed by the researchers. The scale consisted of two parts: "open to new tastes" and "inquisitiveness about new tastes". International students' attitudes towards the Turkish foods scale consist of 32 items. Each item in the scale is rated with 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1=definitely disagree to 5=definitely agree. Average scores are defined as follows: 36.51 for "open to new tastes" and 32.00 for "inquisitiveness about new tastes". The reliability analysis for the total questions is calculated as Cronbach $\alpha=.822$. "Open to new tastes" subscale of the attitude towards Turkish food is calculated as Cronbach $\alpha=.610$ (16 items). "Inquisitiveness about new tastes" subscale of attitude towards Turkish foods are calculated as Cronbach $\alpha=.809$ (16 items). For instance "I would like to taste food with different tastes", "I'm curious about new tastes", "I would like to taste foods prepared with spices from other cultures", "I would like to taste stuffing prepared with different plants' leaves and flowers: for example stuffed squash blossoms, stuffed cherry blossoms and stuffed mulberry blossoms, etc." are introduced in "open to new tastes" subscale. "I would taste a food if it is lawful with regards to religion", "I would like to taste a food if it's close to my own food culture", "I would like to taste a food if it's healthy", "I would like to taste a food if it is served in a traditional way" are introduced in "inquisitiveness about new tastes" subscale.

Procedure

To conduct the surveys, the students' permission was granted from Gazi University, Turkish Learning Application and Research Center (TOMER). A survey technique was used to collect data for the paper. The questions included in the survey technique were prepared in Turkish. As the part of the process simple questions were asked so that students can understand easily. The survey was conducted on students in a separate classroom in groups after Turkish

lessons. There was no time limitation for students to answer the questions and measurement tools are applied by the researchers face to face.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis, the country food that international students prefer to prepare at their homes or in dorms that differentiates according to the sex variable was evaluated by an Independent-sample t-test. Whether attitudes of international students towards Turkish foods differentiates according to sex and duration (years) of residency in Turkey subscales was calculated by Independent-samples t-test. One-way ANOVA analysis was applied to determine if there is a difference in attitudes of students towards Turkish foods subscales according to home country variables. The differences between the groups were determined by Post-Hoc Scheffe test. The statistical significance level was accepted as $p < .05$.

RESULTS

The findings, their country foods that international students prefer to prepare at their homes and dorms according to the sex variable, second attitudes of international students towards Turkish foods according to the sex variable, next the attitudes of international students towards Turkish foods according to the longest place of residency variable, and then results are given to

one-way ANOVA analysis results of attitude of international students towards Turkish foods and home country variable. Data is shown in Tables 1 through 4.

According to the Table 1, it is indicated that the score of female students ($M=1.55$) prefer to prepare to Turkish foods at their homes and dorms is higher than the score of the male students ($M=1.39$). There is statistically significant difference determined in the average scores according to the sex variable ($p < .05$). However, it is determined that the average score of male students ($M=1.50$) who prefer to prepare foods from "their own country" is higher than the score of female students ($M=1.38$). Although there is a difference in arithmetic means, it is determined that it is not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Therefore, compared to females many males have the responsibility of preparing meals and enjoy cooking for their families and themselves.

It is apparent that score of female students ($M=37.06$) on "open to new tastes" subscale of attitude towards Turkish foods are higher than the score of male students ($M=36.18$). There is no statistically significant difference determined in arithmetic means according to the sex variable ($p > .05$). However, the score of female students ($M=34.08$) is higher than the score of male students ($M=32.27$) in the "inquisitiveness about new tastes" subscale of attitude towards Turkish foods scale. A statistically significant difference is determined in mean scores according to sex variable ($p < .05$), (Table 2).

Table 1: Means, standard deviation and t-test values of country food that international students prefer to prepare at their homes and dorms according to sex variable

Country food that students prefer to prepare	Sex	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Turkish Foods	Female	80	1.55	.500	2.228	.027*
	Male	132	1.39	.490		
Own Country Foods	Female	80	1.38	.490	-1.596	.112
	Male	132	1.50	.501		

* $p < .05$

Table 2: Means, standard deviation and t-test values of attitudes of international students toward Turkish food according to sex variable

Subscales	Sex	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Open to New Tastes	Female	80	37.06	4.819	1.232	.219
	Male	132	36.18	5.111		
Inquisitiveness About New Tastes	Female	80	34.08	5.983	2.309	.022*
	Male	132	32.27	5.267		
Total of Attitude Towards Turkish Foods	Female	80	69.21	10.332	1.911	.057*
	Male	132	66.53	9.641		

* $p < .05$

The scores of students who have been residing in Turkey for a year ($M=36.51$) and the scores of students have been residing in Turkey for two years or more ($M=36.53$) is close to each other for “open to new tastes” subscale of attitude towards Turkish foods scale. There is no statistically significant difference determined in mean scores according to the duration of residency in Turkey ($p>.05$). Nevertheless while the score of students residing in Turkey for a year ($M=31.14$) is slightly higher, the score of students residing in Turkey for two years or more ($M=30.63$) is lower for “inquisitiveness about new tastes” subscale. A statistically significant difference is not determined between arithmetic means according to duration of residency in Turkey ($p>.05$), (Table 3).

In Table 4 there is a statistically significant difference between mean scores of the “open to new tastes” subscale of attitude of international

students towards Turkish foods scale and the home country variable [$F_{(4,26;6,24)}=3.836, p<.05$]. According to paired comparisons carried on with Scheffe HSD Post-Hoc test, which is applied to determine the source of the differences among groups, the score of students from the Middle East ($M=37.63$), the score of students from East Asia ($M=37.53$) and the score of students from Turkish Republics ($M=36.66$) are close to each other, and it is determined that the score of students from the Balkan countries ($M=35.47$) and the students from Africa ($M=33.69$) are lower.

It is determined that there is not a statistical significant difference between the mean scores of home country variable of students in the “inquisitiveness about new tastes” subscale [$F_{(5,03;6,37)}=1.875, p>.05$]. However, while the scores of students from East Asia ($M=35.30$) are higher, the scores of students from Turkish Republics ($M=33.18$) Middle East ($M=32.60$),

Table 3: Means, standard deviation and t-test values of attitudes of international students toward Turkish food according to longest place of residency variable

Subscales	Longest residence duration (years)	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Open to New Tastes	1	154	36.51	4.75	-.028	.978
	≤2	58	36.53	5.67		
Inquisitiveness About New Tastes	1	154	33.16	5.50	.894	.372
	≤2	58	32.39	5.87		
Total of Attitude Towards Turkish Foods	1	154	67.75	9.69	.516	.606
	≤2	58	66.96	10.72		

$p>.05$

Table 4: One-way ANOVA analysis results of attitude of international students toward Turkish food and home country variable

Subscales	Home country	n	Mean	SD	F	p	Relation between groups
Open to New Tastes	Turkish Republics (1)	50	36.66	4.32	3.836	.005*	(2-4)*
	Middle East (2)	68	37.63	4.71			
	Balkan countries (3)	38	35.47	4.26			
	Africa (4)	26	33.69	6.24			
	East Asia (5)	30	37.53	5.51			
Inquisitiveness About New Tastes	Turkish Republics (1)	50	33.18	5.58	1.875	.116	-
	Middle East (2)	68	32.60	5.35			
	Balkan countries (3)	38	32.28	5.03			
	Africa (4)	26	31.73	5.75			
	East Asia (5)	30	35.30	6.37			
Total of Attitude Towards Turkish Foods	Turkish Republics (1)	50	67.98	9.54	2.437	.048	-
	Middle East (2)	68	68.16	9.38			
	Balkan countries (3)	38	65.84	8.39			
	Africa (4)	26	63.50	11.37			
	East Asia (5)	30	71.06	11.47			

* $p<.05$

the Balkan countries ($M=32.28$), and Africa ($M=31.73$) are lower. It is determined that there is not a statistically significant difference between mean scores according to students' home country ($p>.05$).

DISCUSSION

It is determined that the scores of female students who prepare "*Turkish foods*" rather than their home countries' food is higher than the scores of male students when the students to prepare food at their homes and dorms. It is found that female students prefer preparing Turkish food more than male students ($p<.05$). It is assumed that female students internalize preparing food from various countries more easily than males, as females typically help their mothers while preparing food during younger ages. In a research by Kucukkomurler and Gumus (2005) it is claimed that 47.0 % of female international students have no difficulties in getting used to Turkish food, 25.2 % of them have difficulties in getting used to Turkish food, and 17.3 % of them get used to Turkish food partially. As Ozdemir and Kinay (2004) state, Turkish food has a unique taste and there are various methods of preparing meals and types of foods so meals have their own tastes. According to another research, although similar results can be found for the present paper, female are more "*open to new tastes*" than males since they help their mothers in the kitchen while preparing meals and they are more familiar with various kinds of food than males (Hartmann et al. 2013; Ozgen 2014). And so, according to female students, male' students are also more willing to try new foods flavors.

Another result of the research is that a statistically significant difference is not determined between female and male student for "*open to new tastes*" subscale of attitude of international students towards Turkish food because they can't get used to tastes from different countries ($p>.05$). However, the reason of the high level of significance for "*inquisitiveness about new tastes*" subscale is higher for female students is that they are curious and interested in food tastes from different countries' cultures ($p<.05$). The reason for the inquisitive about new tastes subscale level of students towards Turkish food is that students are being slow to adapt to new flavors do not have an inquisitiveness attitude towards new kinds of foods. Kiroglu et al. (2010),

stated that international student can't get used to Turkish foods and they bring different spices and horse meat from their own countries to Turkey.

Another result of the paper is that the scores of students residing in Turkey for a year and students residing in Turkey for two years or more for "*open to new tastes*" subscale of students' attitude towards Turkish foods are almost the same. There is no statistically significant difference determined between residency time of students in Turkey for educational purposes ($p>.05$). Also a statistically significant difference is not determined between mean scores of students' residency in Turkey for a year and students' residency in Turkey for two or more years for "*inquisitiveness about new tastes*" subscale of attitude of students towards Turkish food ($p>.05$). It is assumed that the students' overall experience in Turkey will be negative, if their tastes do not adapt to the Turkish foods, and they cannot find affordable food alternatives from their home country. Karaoglu (2007) indicates that as cultural resemblances increase, students' level of adoption of the culture they live in increases while cultural differences decrease adoption behavior. Savkay (2000) stated that since Turkish foods are open to cultures of international ethnic groups, food cultures are similar to each other and easy to adopt.

Another important result of the present research is that while the scores of students from the Middle East, East Asia and the Turkish Republics are almost the same for "*open to new tastes*" subscale of attitudes of international students towards Turkish foods, the scores of students from the Balkan countries and Africa are lower and a statistically significant difference is determined ($p<.05$). However the country variable mean scores of students from East Asia is higher for "*inquisitiveness about new tastes*" subscale, the scores of students from the Turkish Republic, the Middle East, the Balkan countries and Africa is lower and a statistically significant difference is not determined ($p>.05$). This is an indicator that students who stay in Turkey for educational purposes get used to the rich culture, exotic tastes, eating habits, and food culture of Turkey over time. As an example, Wilson et al. (2010) states that daughters of families who migrated to Australia from Africa began to adapt to the Australian cuisine as their duration of residency increased.

CONCLUSION

The present paper is conducted to determine the attitude towards Turkish foods of international students who come to Turkey for education. An important finding of the paper is that a statistically significant difference is not determined between female and male student for “open to new tastes” subscale of attitude of international students towards Turkish food because they can’t get used to tastes from different countries. However, the reason of the high level of significance for “inquisitiveness about new tastes” subscale is higher for female students is that they are curious and interested in food tastes from different countries’ cultures. Another important result of the present research is that while the scores of students from the Middle East, the East Asia and the Turkish Republics are almost the same for “open to new tastes” subscale of attitudes of international students towards Turkish foods, the scores of students from the Balkan countries and Africa are lower, and a statistically significant difference is determined.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are certain limitations of the present paper. There are some recommendations for further papers. Instead of limiting the sample with a single university international students in Ankara and other parts of Turkey can be included in the paper. The attitude of students residing in Turkey for 3 or 4 years may be difficult to determine rather than students residing in Turkey for one and half or two years. A comparative analysis can be conducted among international students and Turkish students in their first and second year at the university who come to Ankara from other cities with regards to their attitudes towards Turkish foods. The research can be conducted on international families settled in Turkey after they complete their education to determine their attitudes towards Turkish foods.

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