



Perceptions of University Students about the Basic Issues of Democracy in Türkiye*

Abdullah Murat Tuncer

Department of Political Science, AMT Consultancy, Ankara, Türkiye
Email: muratatuncer@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Tuncer, A.M. (2023) Perceptions of University Students about the Basic Issues of Democracy in Türkiye. *Open Access Library Journal*, 10: e10133.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1110133>

Received: April 8, 2023

Accepted: May 22, 2023

Published: May 25, 2023

Copyright © 2023 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

The thoughts of university youth, which is the most important fragment of a country especially in terms of social intellectuals, on democracy will provide important information about democracy education and tendencies. In our study, we aimed to see the basic democracy perceptions of university students in Türkiye. Four hundred eighty-six (486) university students investigated the opinions of Turkish University Students on Democracy. They are from 34 different universities, most of which are public universities (64.2%). 486 university students with an associate degree, undergraduate and graduate and postgraduate university students between the ages of 18 - 65 filled out the questionnaire. As 4 out of 486 students did not complete most of the questions, they were eliminated and the evaluation was made on 482 students. Out of all students 62.3% were women, 91.2% were single, and 57.9% of the students lived on family assistance. 61.1% of the students live on less than 3000 TL per month. 24.5% live in the dormitory, and 56.8% live with their own family. With the two best definitions of democracy, 99.5% of the students chose the correct definition, and they only defined democracy with its institutions. 71.3% of students indicated education as the three most important institutions for democracy. Approximately 68.2% of students do not consider the election sufficient as a democracy alone. The rate of those who believe the separation of power is necessary for democracy is 62.8%. Those who think the rule of law is important or essential for democracy are 86.1%. The rate of those who see an effective parliament as indispensable for the existence of democracy is 75.6% and 79.6% of students consider media necessary for democracy. 91.9% of the students evaluate democracy in our country as weak.

*This study was produced from the data of A. Murat Tuncer's Ph.D. thesis "The Opinions of University Students on the Basics of Democracy and Higher Education in Turkey" (2023) Department of Political Science, Conley American University. ISBN 978-625-6888-03-6.

Subject Areas

Sociology

Keywords

Democracy, Quality in Democracy, Threats to Democracy, Election and Democracy, Separation of Powers, Rule of Law, Parliament, Independent Media

1. Introduction

Democracy is not so clear whether what is understood from democracy coincides with what is meant to be explained. Especially those who see elections and democracy as equated are pretty common. The requirements of citizenship requirements to just vote in election are not true. The culture of democracy in Türkiye is new; since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, democracy has developed on the understanding of the democratic republic built by the founder of the country, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Tuncer, 2021) [1].

Overall, more than half of the global population (58%) covered in the study thinks that their government “rarely” or “never” acts in their interest. In the democracies surveyed, a majority of the population (64%) believes that their government “rarely” or “never” acts in the interest of the public. In non-democratic countries are less likely to say their government does work to act in their interest: 41.0% in non-democracies compared to 64% in democracies. The land where dissatisfaction is the lowest is in Saudi Arabia, where only 15% think the government “never” or “rarely” acts in their interest (Democracy Perception Index 2018) [2].

The democratic perception of university youth is essential in agreeing with our hopes for our country and shaping our future importance. As thinking young people, how university students perceive democracy is more important than any other segment. Naturally, each individual’s perception is essential, “A single clueless voter can cause the downfall of a nation.” JF Kennedy is saying (Tuncer, 2021) [1].

Democracy, as we understand it today, emerged in the 1900s. Before 1918, all British men were granted the right to vote for the first time. All British women were able to vote in 1928.

The understanding of participatory governance, which is essential in the religion of Islam, is seen in the Constitution of Medina, the first written Constitution, and the understanding of democracy. The Constitution of Medina provided political rights in forty-eight articles without discrimination of any faith. In particular, the principle of freedom of belief and life and the individuality of the crime entered into a constitution for the first time with the Constitution of Medina (Eliaçık, 2019 [3]; Eliaçık, 2016 [4]).

Some are endowed with creative attributes and believe they were born to stay in

power forever. Those who think power management towed upon them must forever abhor democracy because democracy will not allow these types to seize power and stay in power under normal conditions in educated and minded societies.

Democracy has advantages as well as disadvantages. For example, while political equality gives everyone the right to vote, it provides the same and equal voting rights to those who want to end democracy and those who defend democracy. In other words, you must treat those who want to kill your brother and those who want to protect them equally. How true is that? In order not to experience such an example, the management style in democracies should inevitably exist with protective mechanisms. For example, it is essential to include competent experts and to take the initiative in making decisions, to prevent judgments from being personal decisions, to rely on the knowledge of the director, but to be aware that the director is more than information, and to define the competence of management well.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

The sample size for the study was determined as 486 students with a margin of error of 4.5% at a confidence level of 95%. The 486 students were selected proportionally according to the type of university, with 65% from public universities and 35% from private foundation universities. The study includes all students from departments, faculties, private foundations, and public universities in all provinces in Türkiye between October 2021 and December 2022, regardless of the male or female gender. The questionnaire form prepared in Google Form was announced for university students to answer. Access was promoted through many channels such as social media channels, mutual communication, telephone access, and promotion on the YouTube channel. Questions left unanswered if they were undesirable or did not have an opinion were not taken into account. If minimum of 15 answers were not received on a questionnaire, that form was ignored and not considered. However, this information (how many people gave incomplete answers to which questions) was also given in the results of the thesis. The forms filled on the paper were also transferred to the Google form, and it was ensured that all answers were obtained in the same excel environment in order to evaluate them properly.

The proportions and The Form program of Google calculated the ratios and percentages of the answer options for each question.

The results that were deemed necessary were evaluated statistically because of the correlation relations.

Statistical correlation analysis was done using the IBM SPSS 27 package program. Whether the distribution of continuous variables was normal or not was determined by the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Chi-square Test, Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis H Test , McNemar Test were used to determine whether the differences in democracy definitions of the students in Private and Public Universities and according to the year of the students which spend in the university were significant or not.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the summary of demographic information.

Table 1. Summary of demographic information.

		N	%
Gender	Female	298	62.3%
	Male	180	37.7%
Age groups	<20	125	26.2%
	20 - 25	267	55.9%
	26 - 30	33	6.9%
	31 - 35	23	4.8%
	36 - 40	11	2.3%
	>40	19	4.0%
Marital status	Single	436	91.2%
	Married	42	8.8%
Completed high school type	Science high school	30	6.4%
	Anatolian high school	243	51.5%
	Vocational high school	25	5.3%
	Public high school	71	15.0%
	Private high school	59	12.5%
	Other	44	9.4%
Type of continuing education	Associate degree	130	27.3%
	Graduate (License)	287	60.0%
	Postgraduate (Master)	44	9.4%
	Ph.D.	16	3.3%
Who covers your income?	Active working	116	24.3%
	Family assistance	277	57.9%
	Education credit	43	8.8%
	Scholarships	44	9.0%
How much do you live on monthly?	1.000 - 3.000 TL	289	61.1%
	3.001 - 4.500 TL	49	10.4%
	4.501 - 6.000 TL	49	10.4%
	>6.000 TL	86	18.2%
Where do you live?	At home by myself or with friends	85	17.8%
	Dormitories	117	24.5%
	With my family	271	56.8%
	Other	4	0.8%
The type of university you studied for graduation	Public	300	64.2%
	Private	167	35.8%
What year of your university education are you in?	First year	199	42.3%
	Second year	76	16.1%
	Third year	73	15.5%
	Fourth year	80	16.7%
	4+ year	43	9.1%

3.1. The Best Description of Democracy

The vast majority of students concentrate on two definitions of democracy; 1) “The rulers should be elected in fair elections, be open to public scrutiny, and go through elections. A description of democracy should include; “The multi-party system, fair election, parliament, accountability, the existence of opposition, and the rule of law” and 2) A form of government in which the political control is directly in the hands of the people or the representatives freely chosen by the people at regular inter. All citizens are considered equal regardless of their social and economic status.

3.2. What Are the Three Most Important Institutions for a Quality Democracy?

Most students preferred education, parliament, and the economy as the most important institutions of democracy, respectively. The army, police, and social media are the least preferred democratic institutions. Only 20.9% of the students chose elections, which were held with a secret ballot and open classification as an essential institution for the quality of democracy. While university students state education as the most important institution of democracy, they also express perhaps our most important problem. Although the budget allocated to education and teachers’ salaries are not a complete indicator of the quality of education, these criteria can indirectly show the value of education in that country. According to the European education report, our country is among the worst in terms of new teacher salaries and education has not been placed on solid foundations for almost half a century

(<http://tr.euronews.com/next/2022/11/24/turkiye-ve-avrupanin-diger-ulkelerinde-ogretmen-maaslari-ne-kadar-grafik>). Compared to Eurydice’s previous reports, Türkiye is the only country where teacher salaries have decreased in euro terms in the last 11 years. When the 2009/2010 and 2020/2021 periods are compared, annual gross salaries in Türkiye decreased by 10 percent in euro terms.

3.3. In the Answers Given to the Question of Which Three Countries Are Examples of Democracy

In the question of which countries you would choose as the three countries that can set an example for democracy in the world, 56.8% of the students stated Switzerland, The Netherlands 49%, Sweden 39.9%. Only 10.2% of the students included Türkiye as an example of democracy.

3.4. The Importance of Elections for Democracy

68.2% of the students do not consider the election alone is sufficient for democracy.

3.5. The Most Critical Threats to Democracy

According to the answers given to the three critical threats to democracy questions, the most frequently chosen option was sectarianism (63.2%), and the second most commonly stated threat was the failure in economy (55.3%), the

third most frequently stated threat was the ethnic discrimination (44.1%), External forces are perceived as a threat to democracy by 22.4% and survivability issues by 18.1%.

3.6. The Importance of the Separation of Powers for Democracy

While 52.3% of the students say that the separation of powers is essential in a democracy, only 8.3% say it is not crucial. 28.9% of students were undecided about the importance of the separation of powers in a democracy.

3.7. The Importance of Being the State of Law for Democracy

89.3% of the students find it essential to be a state of law for democracy. While 2.5% stated it is unimportant, 8.2% could not make a complete decision.

3.8. The Importance of the Existence of an Effective Parliament for Democracy

86.1% of the students who answered stated that the existence of the parliament is essential for democracy. While 11.2% of the students were undecided, only 2.7% did not find it necessary.

3.9. The Importance of the Existence of Independent Media for Democracy

It is stated by 79.6% of the students believe that the existence of independent media is essential for democracy. While 5.0% said it was unnecessary, the rest were undecided.

3.10. The Quality of Democracy for Türkiye

71.5% of university students describe democracy in our country as poor quality, and only 8.1% of students find democracy in our country high quality. The remaining of students is undecided about the quality of our democracy.

3.11. Most Important Institutions for Democracy

The three most important institutions for democracy were given as education (71.3%), economy (49.3%), and parliament (36.2%).

4. Discussion

Although the words democracy and citizenship are taught in the lessons, their contents remain undetected by the students (Fidan, 2009) [5].

With the school culture shaping, the perception of democracy has been shown, and the effectiveness of administrators and school productivity will increase (Yasan, 2020) [6]. In fact, how much democracy we need is related to what we perceive from democracy (Brennan, 2022) [7].

It is clear that while the perception and ideas of democracy are being investigated in a country, there must be sufficient democracy in that country to receive open statements from those who can answer without fear. Otherwise, people can-

not openly say what they think out of fear. It becomes tough to understand what they are feeling and thinking.

Most university students do not see democracy in our country as sufficient. Most students consider democracy as the rulers should be elected in fair elections, being open to public scrutiny, and going through elections. A description of democracy should include; “The multi-party system, fair election, parliament, accountability, the existence of opposition, and the rule of law”. This definition shows that democracy has a correct meaning for most students. Unfortunately, most university students do not see democracy in our country as a quality democracy. This is a severe warning to the rulers, and essential steps should be taken to improve our democracy.

The state of the law considered as the most critical institution indispensable for democracy. 89.4% are of this opinion.

Education, the economy, and parliament are the most important institutions for democracy.

The three most significant threats to democracy are sectarianism, communalism, ethnic discrimination, and a poorly managed economy.

This research showed us that the thoughts of university students on democracy, in general, have matured.

After first and secondary school education, university students affect and shape the education perception.

Linking the question “Which of the following describes democracy?” question has been addressed. The answers to this question are as follows:

- 1) The people elect their own rulers with their votes.
- 2) It is the ability of the people to elect and supervise the administrators with their votes.
- 3) It is the ability of the people to elect and control the rulers and to remove them from power with their votes.
- 4) The rulers should be elected through fair elections, be open to public scrutiny, and go through elections. A description of democracy should include; “The multi-party system, fair election, parliament, accountability, the existence of Opposition, and the rule of law”.
- 5) A form of government in which the political control is directly in the hands of the people or the representatives freely chosen by the people at regular intervals, and all citizens are considered equal regardless of their social and economic status.

In **Table 2**, “Which of the following describes democracy?” Each definition of the question was compared according to the type of university (public, private) students attended.

According to the university type, a statistically significant difference was found between the opinions of “Democracy is the people electing their own administrators with their votes” at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). According to this result; Students studying at private universities stated that they agreed with the statement “Democracy is the people electing their own rulers with their

Table 2. The definitions of Democracy according to the University type and the statistical value of the difference (n and %).

Definition	Public University	Private University	p value
No.1	60 (20.2%)	71 (43.3%)	0.000*
No.2	20 (6.7%)	27 (16.5%)	0.001*
No.3	41 (13.8%)	38 (23.2%)	0.011*
No.4	204 (68.7%)	75 (45.7%)	0.000*
No.5	130 (43.8%)	53 (32.3%)	0.016*

* $p < 0.05$.

votes” at a higher rate. While 20.2% of the students who study at public universities say yes to this opinion, the rate of participation of students who study at private universities is 43.3%.

According to the university type, a statistically significant difference was found between the opinions of “Democracy is the ability to elect and supervise administrators with the votes of the people” at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). According to this result; Students studying at private universities stated that they agreed with the statement “Democracy is the ability of the people to elect and control administrators with their votes” at a higher rate. While the rate of students studying at public universities saying yes to this view is 6.7%, the rate of participation by students studying at private universities is 16.7%.

According to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found between the opinions of “Democracy is the ability of the people to elect and supervise the administrators and remove them from power with their votes” at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). According to this result; Students studying at private universities stated that they agreed with the statement “Democracy is the ability of the people to elect and control the rulers and remove them from power with their votes” at a higher rate. While the rate of students studying at public universities saying yes to this view is 13.8%, the rate of participation by students studying at private universities is 23.2%.

According to the type of university, “Democracy is the ability of the rulers to be elected through fair elections, to be open to public scrutiny and to be elected again. Multi-party system, fair elections, parliament; accountability, independent media, existence of opposition, rule of law”, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). According to this result; “Democracy is the ability of the rulers to be elected through fair elections, open to public scrutiny, and to be elected again. Multi-party system, fair elections, parliament; accountability, independent media, the existence of opposition, the rule of law”, students from public universities stated that they agreed with the statement at a higher rate. While the rate of students studying at private universities saying yes to this view is 45.7%, the rate of participation of students studying at public universities is 68.7%.

According to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found between the views of “Democracy is a form of government in which the

political control is directly in the hands of the people or the representatives freely chosen by the people at regular intervals, and all citizens are considered equal regardless of their social and economic status” ($p < 0.05$). According to this result; Students studying at public universities stated that they agreed with the statement “Democracy is a form of government in which the political control is directly in the hands of the people or the representatives freely chosen by the people at regular intervals and all citizens are considered equal regardless of their social and economic status”. While the rate of students studying at private universities saying yes to this view is 32.3%, the rate of participation of students studying at public universities is 43.8%.

As a result, out of the five definitions given about democracy, the first three definitions were mostly attended by students studying at private universities, while students studying at public universities mostly agreed with the 4th and 5th definitions.

By type of university, “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The results obtained in relation to the question are as follows.

In **Table 3**, the responses to the question “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” and the statistical value of the difference was given by type of university.

In the evaluation of the answers to the question “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The rate of students who answered the question “army” is 12.8%. This rate is 11.7% for students studying at public universities and 15% for students studying at private universities. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, no statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$).

Table 3. The Institutions for a quality democracy according to the University type and the statistical value of the difference (n and %).

Most Important Institutions	Public University	Private University	p value
Army	35 (11.7%)	25 (15%)	0.307
University	51 (17%)	37 (22.2%)	0.172
Parliament	133 (44.3%)	36 (21.6%)	0.000*
Security	45 (15%)	41 (24.6%)	0.011*
Economy	123 (41%)	107 (64.1%)	0.000*
Education	218 (72.7%)	115 (68.9%)	0.384
Political Parties	97 (32.3%)	51 (30.5%)	0.690
Media	52 (17.3%)	13 (7.8%)	0.004*
Social Media	15 (5%)	20 (12%)	0.006*
Health System	34 (11.3%)	43 (25.7%)	0.000*
Ballot Box	109 (36.3%)	46 (27.5%)	0.053

* $p < 0.05$.

“What are the most important institutions for a quality of Democracy?”

The rate of students who answered the question “university” is 18.8%. This rate is 17.0% for students studying at public universities and 22.2% for students studying at private universities. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, no statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$).

“What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The rate of students who answered the question “parliament” is 36.2%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 44.3% for students studying at public universities, it is 22.6% for students studying at private universities. The rate of those who prefer the “parliament” option among students studying at public universities is higher than students studying at private universities.

The rate of students who answered the question “security” is 18.4%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 24.6% for students studying at private universities, it is 15.0% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “security” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who answered the question “economy” is 49.3%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 64.1% for students studying at private universities, it is 41.0% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “economy” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

“When we evaluate the question of the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The rate of students who answered the question “education” is 71.3%. This rate is 72.7% for students studying at public universities and 68.9% for students studying at private universities. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, no statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$).

The rate of students who answered the question “political parties” is 31.7%. This rate is 32.3% for students studying at public universities and 30.5% for students studying at private universities. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, no statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$).

The rate of students who answered the question “media” is 13.9%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 17.3% for students studying at public universities, it is 7.8% for students study-

ing at private universities. The rate of those who prefer the “media” option among students studying at public universities is higher than students studying at private universities.

The rate of students who answered the question “social media” is 7.5%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 12.0% for students studying at private universities, it is 5.0% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “social media” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who answered the question “health system” is 16.5%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 25.7% for students studying at private universities, it is 11.3% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “health system” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who answered the question “ballot box” is 33.2%. This rate is 36.3% for students studying at public universities and 27.5% for students studying at private universities. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, no statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$).

When the difference examined according to the type of university types, the given answers of the question of “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” are:

1) No difference was found between the preference rates of the army, university, political parties and ballot box options between the students studying at private and public universities.

2) A difference was found between the preference rates of parliament, security, economy, education, media, social media and health system options between students studying at private and public universities.

3) While the rate of those who prefer parliamentary and media options is higher among students studying at public universities; The rate of those who prefer security, economy, education, social media and health system options is higher among students studying at private universities.

While evaluating the significant differences in the answers given by the students at private and public universities, it is necessary to evaluate the socioeconomic structures they come from and the structures in the high school they attend.

The evaluation of the question of “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?”

In Table 4, the responses to the question “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?” and the statistical value of the difference were given by type of university.

Table 4. Perception of the most important treats by University Type (n and %).

Most Important Thread	Public University	Private University	p value
Poverty	35 (11.7%)	25 (15%)	0.005*
Sectarianism	51 (17%)	37 (22.2%)	0.000*
Poor economy	133 (44.3%)	36 (21.6%)	0.001*
Parliamentary System	45 (15%)	41 (24.6%)	0.390
Foreign Powers	123 (41%)	107 (64.1%)	0.000*
Survival Problem	218 (72.7%)	115 (68.9%)	0.144
Terrorism	97 (32.3%)	51 (30.5%)	0.000*
Ethnic Discrimination	52 (17.3%)	13 (7.8%)	0.004*
Military Administration	15 (5%)	20 (12%)	0.006*

* $p < 0.05$.

The rate of students who answered the question “poverty” is 33.5%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 41.8% for students studying at private universities, it is 29.0% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “poverty” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who gave the answer “sectarianism” is 63.2%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 71.0% for students studying at public universities, it is 49.1% for students studying at private universities. The rate of those who prefer the “congregationalism”/“sectarianism” option among students studying at public universities is higher than students studying at private universities.

The rate of students who answered “poor economy” is 55.3%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 66.1% for students studying at private universities, it is 49.3% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “poor economy” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who answered “foreign powers” is 22.4%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 32.7% for students studying at private universities, it is 16.7% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “external forces” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who answered “survival problem” is 18.1%. This rate is

20.0% for students studying at public universities and 14.5% for students studying at private universities. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, no statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$).

The rate of students who answered the question “terrorism” is 44.5%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 55.8% for students studying at private universities, it is 38.3% for students studying at public universities. The rate of those who prefer the “terrorism” option among students studying at private universities is higher than students studying at public universities.

The rate of students who answered “ethnic discrimination” is 44.1%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 51.3% for students studying at public universities, it is 30.9% for students studying at private universities. The rate of those who prefer the “ethnic discrimination” option among students studying at public universities is higher than students studying at private universities.

The rate of students who answered the question “military administration” is 21.9%. When this ratio was compared according to the type of university, a statistically significant difference was found at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). While this rate is 24.7% for students studying at public universities, it is 17.0% for students studying at private universities. The rate of those who prefer the “military administration” option among students studying at public universities is higher than students studying at private universities.

According to the type of university “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?” When the answers given to the question are examined;

- 1) No difference was found between the preference rates of the survival problem options between the students studying at private and public universities;
- 2) A difference was found between students studying at private and public universities in terms of the rates of poverty, communalism, poor economy, foreign powers, terrorism, ethnic discrimination and military rule;
- 3) While the rate of those who prefer communalism, ethnic discrimination and military rule is higher among students studying at public universities; The rate of those who prefer the options of poverty, poor economy, foreign powers and terrorism is higher among students studying at private universities.

According to the answers given by students studying at public universities, the order of threats is as follows:

- 1) Sectarianism;
- 2) Poor economy;
- 3) Terrorism;
- 4) Poverty, Military Administration, Survival Problem and Foreign Powers.

The students asked the question “Which three of the following do you think are a significant threat to democracy?” According to the answers given by the students studying at private universities, the ranking of the institutions is as follows:

- 1) Poor economy, Terrorism, Sectarianism;
- 2) Poverty, Foreign Powers, Ethnic Discrimination;
- 3) Military Administration, Survival Problem.

When we look at the ranking by both general and university type; for students studying at universities, the three most important threats to democracy are Sectarianism, poor economy and terrorism.

By the years spent at the university, “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The results obtained in relation to the question are as follows.

In Table 5, the responses to the question “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” and the statistical value of the difference was given by the years spent at the university.

When “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” question analysed, the proportions of students who answered the question “army” are compared according to the years spent at the university, there is no statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 14.6% for students in their first year of university, 13.2% for students in their second year, 9.6% for students in their third year, 8.8% for students in their fourth year, and 16.3% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

Table 5. The Institutions for a quality democracy according to the years spent at the university and the statistical value of the difference (n and %).

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	4+ year	p value
Army	29 (14.6%)	10 (13.2%)	7 (9.6%)	7 (8.8%)	7 (16.3%)	0.575
University	38 (19.1%)	16 (21.1%)	13 (17.8%)	15 (18.8%)	9 (20.9%)	0.987
Parliament	51 (25.6%)	29 (38.2%)	31 (42.5%)	36 (45%)	21 (48.8%)	0.002*
Security	48 (24.1%)	11 (14.5%)	12 (16.4%)	10 (12.5%)	6 (14%)	0.103
Economy	122 (61.3%)	33 (43.4%)	25 (34.2%)	34 (42.5%)	17 (39.5%)	0.000*
Education	144 (72.4%)	51 (67.1%)	54 (74%)	54 (67.5%)	31 (72.1%)	0.818
Political Parties	53 (26.6%)	28 (36.85%)	27 (37%)	32 (40%)	9 (20.9%)	0.059
Media	21 (10.6%)	11 (14.5%)	11 (15.1%)	14 (17.5%)	9 (20.9%)	0.334
Social Media	19 (9.5%)	4 (5.3%)	5 (6.8%)	4 (5%)	3 (7%)	0.635
Health System	58 (29.1%)	8 (10.5%)	4 (5.5%)	6 (7.5%)	2 (4.7%)	0.000*
Ballot Box	47 (23.6%)	33 (43.4%)	33 (45.2%)	31 (38.8%)	11 (25.6%)	0.001*

* $p < 0.05$.

The proportions of students who answered the question “university” do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level when compared to the years spent at the university ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 19.1% for students in their first year of university, 21.1% for students in their second year, 17.8% for students in their third year, 18.8% for students in their fourth year, and 20.9% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

The proportions of students who gave the answer “parliament” show a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$) when compared to the years the students spent at the university. This rate is 25.6% for students in their first year of university, 38.2% for students in their second year, 42.5% for students in their third year, 45.0% for students in their fourth year, and 48.8% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years. The rate of those who prefer the “parliament” option among students who have been in university for more than 4 years is higher than other students.

The proportions of students who answered the question “security” do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level when compared to the years spent at the university ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 24.1% for students in their first year of university, 14.5% for students in their second year, 16.4% for students in their third year, 12.5% for students in their fourth year, and 14.0% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

“Economy” as an answer for this question was compared with the years spent at the university; there was a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). This rate is 61.3% for students in their first year of university, 43.4% for students in their second year, 34.2% for students in their third year, 42.5% for students in their fourth year and 39.5% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years. The rate of those who prefer the “economy” option among the students who are in their first year at the university is higher than the other students.

When the proportions of students who gave the answer “education” were compared according to the years spent at the university, there was no statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 72.4% for students in their first year of university, 67.1% for students in their second year, 74.0% for students in their third year, 67.5% for students in their fourth year and 72.1% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

“What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The proportions of students who answered the question “political parties” do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level when compared to the years spent at the university ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 26.6% for students in their first year of university, 36.8% for students in their second year, 37.0% for students in their third year, 40.0% for students in their fourth year, and 20.9% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

“What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The proportions of students who answered the question “media”

do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level when compared to the years spent at the university ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 10.6% for students in their first year of university, 14.5% for students in their second year, 15.1% for students in their third year, 17.5% for students in their fourth year, and 20.9% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

“What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” The proportions of students who answered the question “social media” do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level when compared to the years spent at the university ($p > 0.05$). This rate is 9.5% for students in their first year of university, 5.3% for students in their second year, 6.8% for students in their third year, .50% for students in their fourth year, and 7.0% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

When the proportions of students giving the answer “health system” are compared according to the years spent at the university, there is a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). This rate is 29.1% for students in their first year of university, 10.5% for students in their second year, 5.5% for students in their third year, 7.5% for students in their fourth year, and 4.7% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years. The rate of those who prefer the “health system” option among the students who are in their first year at the university is higher than the other students. The rate of those who prefer the “health system” option is the lowest among students who have been in university for more than 4 years.

“What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” When the proportions of students who answered the question “ballot box” were compared according to the years spent at the university, there was a statistically significant difference at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). This rate is 23.6% for students in their first year of university, 43.4% for students in their second year, 45.2% for students in their third year, .38.8% for students in their fourth year, and 25.6% for students who have been in university for more than 4 years. The rate of those who prefer the “ballot box” option among the students who are in their third year at the university is higher than the other students. The rate of those who prefer the “ballot box” option is the lowest among students who are in their first year of university.

According to the years spent at the university, “Which are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” When the answers given to the question are examined;

- 1) There was no difference between the rate of preference of army, university, security, education, political parties, media and social media options according to the years spent at the university;

- 2) A difference was found between the preference rates of parliament, economy, health system and ballot box options, according to the years spent at the university.

According to the years spent at the university, “Which are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” McNemar test was applied for the differences between the yes rates given to the choices.

“What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” According to the answers given by the students who are in their first year at the university, the ranking of the institutions is as follows:

- 1) Education;
- 2) Economy;
- 3) Health, Political parties, Parliament, Security, Ballot box, University;
- 4) Army, Media, Social media.

According to the answers to the question of “What do you think are the three most important institutions for a quality democracy?” given by the students who are in their second year at the university, the ranking of the institutions is as follows:

- 1) Education;
- 2) Economy, Ballot box, Parliament, Political parties;
- 3) University, Security, Media, Army, Health system, Social Media.

According to the answers given by the students who are in their third year at the university, the ranking of the institutions is as follows:

- 1) Education;
- 2) Ballot box, Parliament, Political parties, Economy;
- 3) University, Security, Media, Army, Social media, Health system.

According to the answers given by the students who are in their 4th year at the university, the ranking of the institutions is as follows:

- 1) Education;
- 2) Parliament, Economy, Political parties, Ballot box;
- 3) University, Media, Security, Army, Health system, Social media.

According to the answers given by the students who are in their 4+ year at the university regarding the question, the ranking of the institutions is as follows:

- 1) Education;
- 2) Parliament, Economy, Ballot box, University, Political parties, Media, Army, Security, Social media, Health system.

By the years spent at the university, “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?” The results obtained in relation to the question are as follows.

In **Table 6**, the responses to the question “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?” and the statistical value of the difference was given by the years spent at the university.

The percentages of students who responded with “poverty” to the question do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared by the years students have spent in the university ($p > 0.05$). These rates are 36.0% for first-year students, 25.0% for second-year students, 24.7% for third-year students, 42.5% for fourth-year students, and 32.6% for students who have been in university for more than four years.

Table 6. Perception of the most important treats by the years spent at the university (n and %).

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	4+ year	p value
Poverty	71 (36%)	19 (25%)	18 (24.7%)	34 (42.5%)	14 (32.6%)	0.074
Sectarianism	108 (54.8%)	52 (68.4%)	53 (72.6%)	56 (70%)	25 (58.1%)	0.021*
Poor economy	117 (59.4%)	42 (55.3%)	42 (57.5%)	37 (46.3%)	19 (44.2%)	0.183
Parliamentary System	27 (13.7%)	5 (6.6%)	12 (16.4%)	6 (7.5%)	4 (9.3%)	0.203
Foreign Powers	59 (29.9%)	17 (22.4%)	8 (11%)	16 (20%)	6 (14%)	0.008*
Survival Problem	33 (16.8%)	15 (19.7%)	17 (23.3%)	16 (20%)	5 (11.6%)	0.547
Terrorism	95 (48.2%)	31 (40.8%)	29 (39.7%)	36 (45%)	17 (39.5%)	0.620
Ethnic Discrimination	81 (41.1%)	38 (50%)	32 (43.8%)	34 (42.5%)	21 (48.8%)	0.689
Military Administration	36 (18.3%)	25 (32.9%)	11 (15.1%)	18 (22.5%)	13 (30.2%)	0.031*

* $p < 0.05$.

The percentages of students who responded with “sectarianism” to the same question show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared by the years students have spent in the university ($p < 0.05$). These rates are 54.8% for first-year students, 68.4% for second-year students, 72.6% for third-year students, 70.0% for fourth-year students, and 58.1% for students who have been in university for more than four years. The rate of students who chose “sectarianism” as a threat to democracy is higher among third-year students compared to other students, and the rate is lower for first-year students compared to other students.

The percentages of students who responded with “poor economy” to the same question do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared by the years students have spent in the university ($p > 0.05$). These rates are 59.4% for first-year students, 55.3% for second-year students, 57.5% for third-year students, 46.3% for fourth-year students, and 44.2% for students who have been in university for more than four years.

The percentages of students who responded with “parliamentary system” to the same question do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared by the years students have spent in the university ($p > 0.05$). These rates are 13.7% for first-year students, 6.6% for second-year students, 16.4% for third-year students, 7.5% for fourth-year students, and 9.3% for students who have been in university for more than four years.

The percentages of students who responded with “foreign powers” to the same question show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared by the years students have spent in the university ($p < 0.05$). These rates are 29.9% for first-year students, 22.4% for second-year students, 11.0% for third-year students, 20.0% for fourth-year students, and 14% for stu-

dents who have been in university for more than four years. The rate of students who chose “external powers” as a threat to democracy is highest among first-year students and lowest among third-year students.

The percentages of students who responded with “survival problem” to the same question do not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared by the years students have spent in the university ($p > 0.05$). The proportion of students who chose this option was 16.8% for first-year students, 19.7% for second-year students, 23.3% for third-year students, 20.0% for fourth-year students, and 11.6% for students who spent more than four years in university.

Similarly, the proportion of students who chose “terrorism” as a threat to democracy did not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared across years spent by students in university ($p > 0.05$). The proportion of students who chose this option was 48.2% for first-year students, 40.8% for second-year students, 39.7% for third-year students, 45.0% for fourth-year students, and 39.5% for students who spent more than four years in university.

Likewise, the proportion of students who chose “ethnic discrimination” as a threat to democracy did not show a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared across years spent by students in university ($p > 0.05$). The proportion of students who chose this option was 41.1% for first-year students, 50.0% for second-year students, 43.8% for third-year students, 42.5% for fourth-year students, and 48.8% for students who spent more than four years in university.

However, the proportion of students who chose “military administration” as a threat to democracy showed a statistically significant difference at the 5% level of significance when compared across years spent by students in university ($p < 0.05$). The proportion of students who chose this option was 18.3% for first-year students, 32.9% for second-year students, 15.1% for third-year students, 22.5% for fourth-year students, and 30.2% for students who spent more than four years in university. Specifically, the proportion of second-year students who chose “military rule” was higher than that of other students, while the proportion of third-year students who chose “military administration” was lower than that of other students.

Upon examining the responses to the question “Which three of the following do you think are important threats to democracy?” according to the years spent at the university, the following findings were observed:

- 1) No difference was found among the preference rates of poverty, poor economy, parliamentary system, survival problem, terrorism, and ethnic discrimination options according to the years spent at the university;
- 2) A difference was found the preference rates of the options of sectarianism, foreign powers, and military administration options according to the years spent at the university;

3) The rate of those who chose the option of sectarianism was higher among students in their third year at the university;

4) The rate of those who chose the option of foreign powers was higher among students in their first year at the university;

5) The rate of those who chose the option of military administration was higher among students in their second year at the university.

According to the years spent at the university, McNemar test was applied for the differences between the yes rates given to the choices of “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?” question.

According to the responses given by students in their first year at the university to the question “Which of the following three do you think are important threats to democracy?” The ranking of threats is as follows:

- 1) Poor economy, sectarianism;
- 2) Terrorism, ethnic discrimination, poverty, foreign powers;
- 3) Military administration, survival problem, parliamentary system.

According to the responses given by students in their second year at the university to the same question, the ranking of threats is as follows:

- 1) Poor economy, sectarianism;
- 2) Terrorism, ethnic discrimination, poverty, foreign powers, military administration, survival problem;
- 3) Parliamentary system.

According to the responses given by students in their third year at the university to the same question, the ranking of threats is as follows:

- 1) Sectarianism;
- 2) Poor economy, Terrorism, ethnic discrimination;
- 3) Poverty, foreign powers, military administration, survival problem, parliamentary system.

According to the responses given by students in their fourth year at the university to the same question, the ranking of threats is as follows:

- 1) Sectarianism;
- 2) Poor economy, Terrorism, ethnic discrimination, poverty;
- 3) Foreign powers, military administration, survival problem;
- 4) Parliamentary system.

According to the responses given by students in their 4th year or above at the university to the same question, the ranking of threats is as follows:

- 1) Sectarianism, ethnic discrimination, poor economy, terrorism;
- 2) Poverty, military administration;
- 3) Foreign powers, survival problem, parliamentary system.

5. Conclusions

1) When the answers given to the question of what is democracy are evaluated in terms of private and public universities, citizenship comes first in public universities, and the supervisory function is prominent in students at private universities. The difference is significant ($p < 0.05$).

2) As a most important institution for democracy, parliament is significantly more prominent in public universities ($p < 0.05$).

3) While security, as an important institution for democracy, is prominently prominent in private universities and media in public universities, social media is prominently featured in private universities ($p < 0.05$).

4) As an important institution for democracy, 25.7% of young people from private universities said yes, while this rate was 13.3% in public universities and the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

5) Among the university students who point out the parliament as an important institution for democracy, 25.6% are in their first year, 38.2% are in their second year, 42.5% are in their third year, 45% are in their fourth year and 48.8% are in university for more than four years. As the years increase, the awareness that the parliament is the most important institution for democracy increases significantly ($p < 0.05$).

6) The lowest percentage of students who foresee the health system as an important institution for democracy is in the first year of university, and the difference is significant ($p < 0.05$).

7) Poverty as the most important threat to democracy significantly affects private university students (41.8% in private, 29% in public), sectarianism significantly in public universities (49.1% in private, 71% in public universities), foreign forces in private university students (32.7% in private, 16.7% in public universities), terrorist threat in private universities (53.8% in private, 38.3% in public), ethnic discrimination in public universities (30.9% in private, 51.3% in public), military administration in public universities (17% in private, 24.7% in public) ($p < 0.05$).

8) Among the students who are in their first year, those who see sectarianism as the most important threat to democracy are significantly lower with 54.8% ($p < 0.05$). For students who see foreign forces as the most important threat, the highest value is in the first year with 29.9% ($p < 0.05$). The highest rate of students who see military administration as a threat is 32.9% in 2nd-year students ($p < 0.05$).

9) I believe that increasing impartial studies on these issues will help the system move forward with more reliable steps and support higher education to self-renew and the system to develop by working on concerns about democracy.

In addition to continuing democracy education in secondary education in our country, living in a culture and climate of democracy is essential for perceiving and maintaining democracy and increasing its quality.

10) Democracy is learned through experience rather than written texts. For this reason, basic democratic requirements, such as the rule of law must be met.

11) Sectarianism and ethnic discrimination, seen as threats to democracy, should be taken seriously, as education struggles.

12) University students care about good economic management for democracy. The issue should be taken more seriously, and it should not be forgotten that it is necessary to have a stable economy to keep democracy alive.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Tuncer, A.M. (2021) *Kuantum Politika (Quantum Polics)*. MU Yayınları, İstanbul.
- [2] Rasmussen Global, Alliance of Democracy, Dalia (2023) *Democracy Perception Index 2018*.
- [3] Eliaçık, R.İ. (2019) *Demokratik Özgürlükçü İslam*. Tekin Yayınevi, İstanbul.
- [4] Eliaçık, R.İ. (2016) *İbn Haldun. Yenilikçi Müslüman Düşünürler Dizisi: 6*. Tekin Yayınevi, İstanbul.
- [5] Fidan, N. (2009) *Analyzing 8th Grade Students' Knowledge of Concepts of Democracy and Republic Used in Social Sciences Lesson*. Master's Thesis, Çukurova University, Adana.
- [6] Yasan, B.Z. (2020) *Examining the Relationship between School Managers' Democracy Perceptions and School Culture*. Master's Thesis. Department of Education Management and Supervision Division of Educational Management and Supervision. Yıldız Technical University and Istanbul Aydın University, Istanbul.
- [7] Brennan, J. and Landmore, H. (2022) *Debating Democracy: Do We Need More or Less?* Oxford University Press, New York.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197540817.001.0001>