

Visa Walls and Academic Halls: An Exploration of Schengen Visa Challenges for Turkish Scholars

By

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Table of Content

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| List of Tables..... | iv |
| List of Figures | iv |
| Abstract | v |
| 1. Introduction..... | 1 |
| 2. Literature Review..... | 3 |
| 2.1. Knowledge Exchange within the Context of Academic Mobility..... | 3 |
| 2.2. State Interference with Knowledge Exchange and Academic Mobility..... | 6 |
| 4. Contextual Information | 12 |
| 5. Methodology | 18 |
| 5.1. The Explanatory Design..... | 18 |
| 5.2. Survey..... | 20 |
| 5.2.1. Establishing Survey Criteria: Parameters and Selection Guidelines | 20 |
| 5.2.2. Survey Participants | 21 |
| 5.3. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews..... | 23 |
| 5.3.1. Locating Interview Participants | 24 |
| 5.3.2. Interview Process | 25 |
| 6. Findings and Discussion | 27 |
| 6.1. Schengen Visa Barrier to Academic Knowledge Exchange..... | 27 |
| 6.2. Fostering Academic Mobility and Understanding its Significance | 32 |
| 6.3. Navigating Visa Application Processes: Insights and Experiences..... | 37 |
| 6.4. The Feeling of Being Excluded and Changing Perception of the EU | 44 |
| 6.5. Exploring Further: Additional Insights on Visa Challenges | 46 |
| 6.6. Proposed Strategies: Addressing Visa Barriers for Turkish Academics | 48 |
| 7. Conclusion | 51 |
| Reference List | 53 |
| Appendices | 59 |
| A. Email for Interview Request (Turkish and English Versions)..... | 59 |
| B. Participant Consent Form (Turkish and English Versions)..... | 60 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Table 1: Schengen Visa Applications from Turkey</i> | <i>15</i> |
| <i>Table 2: Interview Participants.....</i> | <i>25</i> |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Survey Participants</i> | <i>21</i> |
| <i>Figure 2: Age Distribution of the Survey Participants</i> | <i>22</i> |
| <i>Figure 3: Country of Residence of the Respondent.....</i> | <i>22</i> |
| <i>Figure 4: Academic Title of the Respondents</i> | <i>23</i> |
| <i>Figure 5: Survey Results on Contribution to Academic Knowledge.....</i> | <i>28</i> |
| <i>Figure 6: Survey Results on Perceived Missed Opportunities.....</i> | <i>30</i> |
| <i>Figure 7: Survey Results on Contribution to Academic Career</i> | <i>31</i> |
| <i>Figure 8: Survey Results on Concerns Regarding Visa Denials</i> | <i>38</i> |
| <i>Figure 9: Survey Results on Concerns Regarding Visa Application Challenges</i> | <i>38</i> |
| <i>Figure 10: Survey Results on Concerns Regarding Application Fees.....</i> | <i>39</i> |

Abstract

The aspiration for visa-free travel to the Schengen zone has been a longstanding desire for Turkish citizens, symbolizing a closer relationship with Europe. These aspirations were first bolstered by promises of increasing civil freedoms and political reforms introduced during the early years of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) administration in 2000s. However, the hopes for visa liberalization began to fade with the onset of a de-Europeanization process characterized by eroding civil liberties. Turkish nationals today face significant challenges when trying to obtain Schengen visas, from excessive costs to burdensome documentation requirements and prolonged processing times. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the impact of the visa-related challenges faced by Turkish citizens, particularly academics who contribute to knowledge exchange through their research, regarding their ability to travel to the Schengen zone. The dominant approach in literature argues that in knowledge economy, the states facilitate the knowledge exchange processes. In contrast, I argue that the states may use visa regulations as a political leverage against other states, and through such policies, they interfere with global knowledge flow. Through survey and interviews conducted among Turkish academics, this study underscores how these people perceive the impact of Schengen visa policies on their personal career and their potential contribution to knowledge flow through interactions with their colleagues in Europe.

Key Words: Schengen visa regime, visa policies, knowledge exchange, Turkish academics

1. Introduction

The right to visa-free travel to the Schengen zone has long been an aspiration for many Turkish citizens. With increasing scores for political rights and civil liberties as well as political reforms during the first term of the Justice and Development Party (the AKP) from 2002 until 2007, the sense of proximity among Turkish citizens to this goal became more visible. Turkey's accession talks with the European Union in 2005 further reinforced this long-awaited dream. However, the so-called 'golden age' did not last too long, the violation of civil liberties by the AKP government has already started in its second term (Öniş 2016, 142). Thus, hopes for visa liberalization were dashed with the onset of the de-Europeanization process, defined as 'the loss or weakening of the EU/Europe as a normative political context' (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016, 5).

The discussions on visa liberalization gained momentum in 2013 after signing the Readmission Agreement between Turkey and the EU, followed by the adoption of a roadmap for visa liberalization. It is known that similar agreements signed by Western Balkan countries with the EU led to visa liberalization later on, making this deal promising for Turkey (Kirişçi 2014). With the escalating migration crisis, the Turkish government believed it could leverage its geographic position between Europe and the Middle East to achieve visa liberalization with the EU.

However, a decade after the signing of the Readmission Agreement, Turkey is remarkably distant from this goal, with its citizens waiting weeks or even months to secure an appointment for Schengen visa application. The non-refundable and high application fees, coupled with the extensive documentation, ranging from financial proofs to flight tickets to the destination country, and the lengthy delays in the decision due to higher scrutiny, make the whole process intolerable for many Turkish citizens. However, the bureaucratic hurdles posed by the Schengen visa regime

are often overlooked in the Global North. In academia, for example, visa regime constitutes a wall between academic and scientific events held in the Global North, and many scholars from the Global South. Among the various visa regimes implemented by the US, UK, Canada, and others, the Schengen visa barrier for Turkish academics is particularly critical for two reasons. First, Turkey's geographic proximity to the European Union and the Schengen area increases the potential for more cooperation between institutions, organizations, and companies. Thus, the Schengen wall is likely to impede more initiatives compared to other visas. Second, although visa liberalization between the Schengen zone and Turkey has been a topic of discussion for a long time, no formal steps have been taken. In light of this, this thesis seeks to explore the impact of Schengen visa regime on the knowledge exchange between academics in a broader sense, as well as academics' career path at the individual level. As part of the conceptual framework, the thesis evaluates Schengen visa regime from the lenses of Kochenov's 'citizen apartheid' concept, which will be explained in the following chapters.

2. Literature Review

The following literature review explores knowledge exchange within the context of academic mobility, highlighting the complex dynamics between knowledge production, knowledge flow, and state interference with knowledge exchange through visa policies. The chapter begins with an overview of the broader literature examining the role of knowledge from diverse perspectives, mainly economic, political, and moral standpoints. Later, it delves into the essential role of higher education institutions within the knowledge economy. The chapter underscores the strategic interests of states and institutions in facilitating academic mobility, along with the policies and initiatives aimed at attracting international scholars. On the other hand, this review also presents the barriers and obstacles faced by academics, particularly concerning visa regulations and bureaucratic hurdles. Lastly, the chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of Turkish academics' experiences with Schengen visa applications particularly within the realm of short-term academic mobility.

2.1. Knowledge Exchange within the Context of Academic Mobility

To better understand the term knowledge exchange, it is essential to understand *knowledge*. Daniel Bell (quoted in Robertson 2008) defines knowledge as “part of the social overhead investment of society..., presented in a book, article, or even a computer program, written down or recorded at some point for transmission, and subject to some rough count.” In that regard, knowledge has a commercial value in the market, which ultimately contributes to economic growth (Robertson 2008, 5) and provides sustainable competitive advantage (Tseng and Lee 2012, 158). In a similar vein, Manuel Castells characterizes the new era, the Information Age, with particular reference to knowledge as driving force for economic and social development, and human agency

as a productive power (quoted in Wilenius 1998, 271). Castells' emphasis on human agency is vital to acknowledge, as he draws attention not only to information and knowledge that depicts the new mode of production, but also to human minds, which he describes as "the source of wealth, power and control over everything" (quoted in Robertson 2008). While these studies have prioritized economic and political perspectives focusing on how knowledge contributes to economic growth, a series of recent studies has taken moral standpoint, focusing on the right to access information as an individual and social right. For example, Lor and Britz (392) draw attention to the importance of equal opportunities that enable individuals to access others' ideas, express their own views, and participate in knowledge society. These studies usually are conducted on the basis of human right to science and culture that is acknowledged in the Article 27 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):¹

Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

In her article, Shaver (2010, 128) stresses out the significance of Article 27 and explores the potential duties and legal obligations of States parties to the human rights treaties related to the right to science and culture. The author contends that Article 27 of the UDHR acknowledges the need for states to perceive science and culture as global public goods (183).

Higher education institutions are often perceived as critical to sustainability of knowledge-economies, as they stimulate innovation and economic growth (Bridgman & Willmott 2007, 149; Florida 2005, 25; Cosh et al. 2006, 5; Abreu et al. 2009, 7). In a similar vein, Aronowitz (2000) refers to universities as 'knowledge factories' (cited in Holbrook & Hulbert 2002, 106). With the

¹ United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 1948.

internationalization of higher education, which refers to bringing international dimension to functions of universities (Knight 1994, 3), mobility became an academic practice (Bauder 2012, 85).

During the knowledge exchange process, academics engage with different types of partners including private, public and third sectors (Abreu et al. 2009, 7). This process usually necessitates mobility where academics share scientific expertise and build academic network (Jöns 2008, 339). Here, mobility is defined as academics' ability 'to move freely from one institution to another and from one country to another for study, research, or employment purposes' (Mizikaci 2005, 76). Academic mobility can be short-term with the aim of returning to one's home country, or long-term/permanent stay in destination country (Carvalho 2021, 155). It can also take various forms, including but not limited to joint curriculum development, international seminars and conferences, joint research projects and publications, franchising and joint degrees (Knight 2004, 27; Knight 2013, 85). More importantly, academic mobility is no longer an 'exception' but an 'expectation' and a necessity for advancement in career (Morano-Foadi 2005, 134). When scholars travel abroad, they acquire research experience and gain insight into academic culture of their destination country and institution (Altbach 1989, 128), and acquaint themselves with diverse intellectual traditions, facilitating knowledge transfer (Alemu 2020, 94). In their study on academics' participation in conferences, Edelheim and his colleagues contend that conferences enable academics to build connections, not only during presentations but also through conversations during coffee breaks between the sessions. Such connections are believed to offer more career opportunities than the publication of a single article in a prestigious journal (Edelheim et al. 2018, 105). From this perspective, Mizikaci (2005, 70) perceives academic mobility as a measure of quality.

In line with internationalization of universities, prestigious Turkish universities have signed bilateral agreements with their counterparts in Europe and North America. Despite limited financial resources, The American Fulbright foundation, the Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Council (TUBITAK) and the Turkish Social Sciences Research Council (TUBA) continue funding academic mobility. Furthermore, Turkish universities pursue cooperative research projects with the European institutions (Mizikaci 2005, 70). Turkey is also member to major European organizations on science and technology, including but not limited to European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO), European Science Foundation (ESF), and European Space Agency (ESA). Buyuktanir Karacan (2021, 9) perceives Turkey's partnerships with European organizations as a tool to maintain relations with the EU in line with Europeanization process.

Within the context of Turkish academics, the impacts of academic mobility at the individual level have also been studied. In terms of language barrier, there is a consensus that attending scientific and academic events abroad positively contributes to academics' belief in self-efficacy in English (Yilmaz et al. 2020, 337; Bedenlier 2017, 193). Bedenlier further contributes to the discussion by presenting that having experience abroad shape understanding and perception of academic identity (2017, 194).

2.2. State Interference with Knowledge Exchange and Academic Mobility

The strategic role of the academics in knowledge production enables academic mobility, as it contributes to economic development from the perspective of the state, civic and economic actors (Bauder 2012, 87). In that regard, one body of the literature focuses on how states and institutions facilitate academic mobility due to their interest in bolstering knowledge production and transfer.

Knight argues that countries are competing in attracting academics to work in their institutions in the twenty-first century ‘brain race’ (2013, 87). A substantial body of literature exists regarding the reasons why the governments should attract international academics and the ways to ensure permanent stay of highly-skilled migrants. In this regard, tax incentives, advanced research infrastructures, and higher salaries (Mahroum 2002, 24; Hercog 2008, 22), better conditions in the process of career promotion, business investment, accommodation, education of migrants’ children and social insurance (Reiner et al. 2017, 34; Li et al. 2020, 165) are identified as key policies to attract foreign academics for long-term mobility.

At the institutional level, Parmar (2002) investigates the impact of three American foundations, Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller in building international knowledge network. The study shows that by bringing together academics from all around the world through seminars and conferences, funding their travels to the top American universities, these foundations reinforced construction of US international hegemony (13). According to findings from the partly state-funded DAAD, which awards merit-based grants for studying at German higher education institutions, foreign academics constituted 13.3% of all academic staff at German universities in 2022 (2023, 76). At the European level, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), Erasmus Program and European Network of Mobility Centres established by the European Commission are just a few that facilitate mobility of foreign researchers to Europe through fellowship programs and grants (Bauder 2012, 87).

On the contrary, not all government policies are designed to facilitate academic mobility, particularly for the short-term temporary mobility. Since the late nineteenth century, the states’ exclusive control over entry of foreign nationals into their territories became a principle (Goodwin-Gill 1982, 291). The documents such as passports, identification cards and visas are the

manifestation of modern state monopolization of ‘the means of legitimate movement’ (Torpey 1998, 256). Since such practices determine who is entitled to enter and who needs to undergo excessive security measures, they reflect power relations (Wondimagegn et al. 2022, 38). In this regard, visa policies cannot be understood without considering their context within international relations, even mirroring complex geopolitical dynamics and multi-dimensional hierarchical and asymmetrical state relations, particularly at the regional level (Czaika, De Haas & Villares-Varela 2018, 590-593).

This modern state practice has influenced all types of mobility, including academic mobility. In this context, there is a growing literature on the challenges faced by the Global South with regard to academic mobility. For example, within African context, Akanle et al. (2013) presents the obstacles African academics encounter in transferring their knowledge, including limited access to information technology, economic hardships, and visa-related issues. The authors argue that visa denials for African academics are influenced by overarching economic hardships in African nations, leading to instances of visa fraud by economic migrants and further complicating the visa application process for genuine scholars (92). Similarly, Hallberg Adu (2019) contributes to the literature by drawing attention to student migration aspirations and mobility in Ghana. The study found high rejection rates and Ghanaian students’ low familiarity with visa regulations, indicating another global injustice (36). In her article, Dixit (2021) draws attention to how global visa regime reinforces racialization of borders and migration with specific reference to her visa denial from the UK.

The challenges related to visas have recently become increasingly prominent within Turkish academia. A series of recent studies showed that Turkish Erasmus students cite Schengen visa regulations as a barrier to mobility (Özler 2012, 8-12; Özbakkaloglu 2014, 18; Yucelsin-Tas

2013). Özler (2012) point out Schengen visa barrier to the extent that many students give up on their granted scholarship and withdraw their application because of discouraging visa procedures. While research surrounding the mobility of Turkish students has grown over the years, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies regarding the challenges faced by Turkish academic staff, particularly within the context of short-term academic mobility.

Most importantly, Meltem Müftüler-Bac (2014) authored a significant policy brief tracing the trajectory from Turkish enthusiasm for EU accession in the early 2000s to the establishment of Schengen visa barriers for Turkish citizens. In her study, the author highlights the traumatic and humiliating experiences faced by Turkish citizens during the Schengen visa application process. Additionally, the policy brief sheds light on the persistent issue of visa denials for Turkish academics invited to seminars and conferences. While the policy brief addresses the fundamental concern of this thesis, the topic requires further elaboration by providing Turkish academics with an opportunity to voice their experiences with the Schengen wall. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by conducting a detailed analysis of the impacts of the Schengen wall on the personal career development of Turkish academics and their potential contributions to academia. Furthermore, the thesis aims to elucidate Turkish academics' perceptions of their position vis-à-vis the Schengen wall, as well as their expectations and emotions surrounding it.

In the following section, conceptual framework that will be utilized in this this will be provided. The chapter will be followed by contextual information regarding the transition from Turkish optimism for EU accession and visa liberalization to the evolving political landscape where visa liberalization is no longer even on the agenda.

3. Conceptual Framework

In this study, I utilize conceptualization of Dmitry Kochenov's (2020) 'citizenship apartheid'. According to Kochenov, the borders between countries are meant to distinguish opportunities for the privileged. In that regard, they reflect prevention of some people from enjoying particular rights, while granting others these rights simultaneously (Kochenov 2023, 2). The color of the passport determines whether one is entitled to exercise worthwhile rights or subject to suffer from liabilities (Kochenov 2019, 1525).

Kochenov's word choice of 'apartheid' is not arbitrary. Similar to the apartheid system in South Africa, where black South Africans were subject to exclusion from rights based on their race, contemporary citizenship regime replicates arbitrary denial of rights for certain group of people (Kochenov 2023, 2). The author further draws attention to distinction of current practices. While apartheid in South Africa was not acknowledged, the exclusion today is actively promoted and reinforced by the international community through various legal and policy frameworks (Kochenov 2023, 2).

Today, majority of the countries that have the highest income are located in the West. Moreover, these countries are characterized by highest levels of security, rights and travel freedom provided for their citizens (Harpaz 2015, 2086). Hence, compared to race, class and gender, citizenship plays a more decisive role in regulating the global system in which some individuals have more access to opportunities (Harpaz 2015, 2086). In a world where non-Western citizens often struggle with various deficiencies that characterizes the Global South, including but not limited to higher rates of unemployment, low wages, corruption, and insecurity (Harpaz 2015, 2087), citizenship becomes a 'birthright lottery' (Shachar 2009).

Moving from this, I evaluate Schengen visa regime from the perspective of ‘citizenship apartheid’ and hypothesize that this visa regulation serves as a tool to justify exclusion of people from enjoying opportunities in Schengen area. In particular, I contend that Turkish academics are deprived from potential advantages of academic mobility through the denial of their right to travel.

It is important to highlight that Dimitry Kochenov bases his analysis on citizenship, whereas this thesis centralizes the visa regime. On the one hand, it should be recognized that the visa regime is part of the current citizenship scheme, where certain nationalities are exempt from strict visa regulations due to agreements between states. Thus, the conceptualization of Kochenov’s ‘citizenship apartheid’ is justifiable from this perspective. On the other hand, while Kochenov focuses on the long-term opportunities and liabilities imposed by the concept of citizenship in general, this thesis aims to demonstrate that the exclusion of certain citizens from specific territories is so strict and sharp that even temporary intervention is not possible. In other words, non-citizens of certain territories cannot benefit from the opportunities that the ‘super citizens’ of the ‘West’ (Boatcă, cited in Kochenov 2023, 3) can enjoy even for a limited time when they are denied a visa.

Furthermore, as a limitation of this research, consulates and intermediary companies do not provide specific reasons for Schengen visa denials. In other words, while the number of rejected applications is known and will be provided, the exact grounds for these rejections are not disclosed. However, this limitation does not constitute a barrier to achieve the goals of the thesis, as my fundamental aim is to demonstrate how Schengen visa regime as an illustration of Kochenov’s ‘citizenship apartheid’ affects academic knowledge exchange and access to information as a fundamental human right.

4. Contextual Information

Up until the early 1980s, Turkish nationals enjoyed visa-free travel to the European Union. However, following the military coup in 1980, European countries began to implement visa requirements for Turkish citizens. This visa requirement was swiftly adopted by all member states and persisted with the establishment of the Schengen regime. The subsequent EU policies became increasingly restrictive, imposing limitations on access to EU territory, implementing stringent visa policies (Ozdemir & Ayata 2018, 182). The current Schengen practice can be characterized as "policing at a distance," as referred by Bigo and Guild (2005, 204). This concept entails exerting control over the movement of people through specific procedures and technologies before individuals enter a particular territory.

Currently, Schengen area includes Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. There are three types of Schengen visas: A type, C type, and D type. The validity period of these visa types varies according to their purpose. A type Schengen visa is used solely for airport transit. C type Schengen visa is valid for short-term stays of up to 90 days within a 180-day period in the Schengen Area. For study, work, or permanent settlement, D type Schengen visa is required, which is valid for a maximum of one year. In our case, academics apply C type Schengen visa, which can be granted in the form of single entry, double entry and multiple entry.

Each Schengen country has its own visa application form.² However, these forms essentially request the same information. In addition to basic personal details such as name, birthplace, date of birth, sex, and civil status, the application form requires additional documents and information. This includes the type of travel document, means of subsistence, an invitation letter, travel medical insurance, means of transport, current occupation, employer's name, address, and telephone number. Applicants are also asked to provide the purpose of the journey, intended date of arrival and departure, entry country, main destination, number of entries, names of hotels or temporary accommodations, fingerprints, contact details of the inviting person, cost of travel and living expenses during the applicant's stay, and how these expenses will be covered, as well as means of support (cash, cheques, credit card, pre-paid accommodation, pre-paid transport of the applicant or the sponsor). Applicants typically submit more supporting documents to facilitate the application process and increase their chances of approval.

Discussions regarding Turkey's short-stay visa liberalization already started on December 16, 2013, following a roadmap outlining conditions for the European Commission to propose amendments allowing citizens of certain states to travel visa-free within the Schengen area. It has been decided that once Turkey fulfills all conditions that are set, the Commission was going to propose visa exemption for Turkish citizens to the European Parliament and Council (De Marcilly and Garde 2016, 4). On October 15, 2015, the European Commission proposed an action plan, aiming to support refugees and host communities in Turkey while facilitating cooperation to restrain illegal migrant influx into the European Union.³ This plan was approved during the EU/Turkey Summit on November 29, 2015, and it outlines various actions to be carried out by both

² The Schengen visa application form for the Netherlands as an example can be found here: https://consular.mfaservices.nl/assets/documents/pdf/forms/schengen Visa_application_form_english.pdf

³ For more information on EU-Turkey joint action plan, please see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/memo_15_5860/MEMO_15_5860_EN.pdf.

Turkey and the EU (The European Council 2015). The European Union made commitments in three key areas: providing financial assistance to Turkey for its mission to host refugees; initiating steps toward visa liberalization for short-term stays of Turkish citizens; and restarting negotiations regarding Turkey's accession to the EU, which had been halted since 2006 (De Marcilly and Garde 2016, 1). On March 18, 2016, an agreement known as the 'EU–Turkey migration deal' was reached to prevent the influx of refugees towards the EU. It is worth noting that despite its title, the statement is not binding and not an 'EU deal' (Kochenov and Ganty 2023, 55). According to this 'lawlessness law' (Kochenov and Ganty 2023, 55), new illegal migrants entering EU territory would be returned to Turkey, with the EU committing to relocate one Syrian refugee from Turkey for each migrant returned. In addition to 6 billion euro to support refugees in Turkey, the deal included provisions for visa liberalization for Turkish nationals, with immediate effect after fulfilling all criteria.⁴ Even though Turkish government's dissatisfaction and threats on *withdrawal* from gentlemen's agreement, the EU has consistently evaluated the deal as a success (Dagi 2020, 213).

Overall, after a decade since the beginning of the discussions regarding the issue, there has not been any step towards the visa liberalization. More importantly, the situation has deteriorated, as Turkish nationals now experience more difficulties to obtain short term visa for Schengen zone.

An escalating trend in the denial of Schengen visa applications from Turkey has been observed, indicating a remarkable increase in rejection rates. The table below demonstrates the results of Schengen visa applications filed by Turkish applicants from 2014 to 2023.

⁴ To see the Statement, please visit: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

Table 1: Schengen Visa Applications from Turkey

| Year | Rejection Rate |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| 2014 | 4% |
| 2015 | 4% |
| 2016 | 4.4% |
| 2017 | 6.5% |
| 2018 | 8.5% |
| 2019 | 9.7% |
| 2020 | 12.7% |
| 2021 | 16.9% |
| 2022 | 15.5% |
| 2023 | 21.7% |

Source: SchengenVisaInfo.com⁵

As mentioned, even though the exact reasons for visa denials are not provided by relevant authorities, the table presents that reasons such as unmet criteria or false documentation cannot explain the increasing rate of rejections. Thus, the rapid increase in visa application rejections from 4% to 20% within only a decade raises questions about the evaluation process of applications within the context of changing political climate and the relations between Turkey and the European Union.

Although the peak for visa rejections was in 2023, the beginning of the trend dates to 2017, and it has been continuing despite the decreasing effects of the pandemic (Erkoyun and Caglayan). In the same vein, previous Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stated that Turkey dismisses “excuses” that are associated to pandemic measures and argued that the rejections are deliberate (Erkoyun and Caglayan). In 2022, Turkey submitted a report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) about the issue, mentioning “long bureaucratic

⁵ For more information, please visit <https://statistics.schengenvisa.info/>.

procedures, complicated application forms, long queues at diplomatic representations, exaggerated conditionality on the applicants' financial situation, interrogative questioning and unexplained visa denials curtail the cross-border movement of persons" (Altunyaldiz 2022, 7).

In April 2024, German President Steinmeier undertook a visit to Istanbul, where he engaged in diplomatic discussions with Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and his delegation. Subsequently, a reception was hosted at the German Embassy, attracting a diverse array of attendees spanning business, journalism, politics, and sports. Noteworthy was the inclusion of new player Burcu Karadağ, who delivered a brief musical performance during the gathering. Karadağ later shared her conversation with President Steinmeier regarding the longstanding visa issue between Turkey and Germany. The German President reportedly asked the relevant authorities to "resolve the visa matter," highlighting the urgency of the issue. After the intervention of the German President, musician Burcu Karadağ was granted a Schengen visa valid for two years (Purtul Ucar 2024). This incident highlights the arbitrariness and absurdity of the situation.

On the other hand, there is no data showing Schengen visa application results based on certain personal information such as gender, age, occupation or income. However, the complaints about the denial of Schengen visa applications are raised by many individuals, including academics, especially in social media. In light of this, in this thesis, I aim to answer following questions: In which ways does Schengen wall impact academics? How does Schengen visa regime impact contributions to academic knowledge exchange? In addition to broader impacts, how does Schengen visa regime impact academics' career aspirations? More importantly, how do academics feel about this barrier vis-à-vis their colleagues in the Global North? Even though Schengen visa regime constitutes a barrier to all academics in the Global South, I am more interested in the case of Turkish academics, particularly because of the increasing rate of visa denials and long-discussed

visa liberalization for Turkey. My foundational motivation to focus on Turkish academics case is to draw attention to the broader implications of using visa liberalization as leverage against Turkey by the European Union.

5. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to capture how Turkish academics perceive Schengen visa barrier vis-à-vis their academic career development and their contribution to academic knowledge exchange. To understand this, I combine qualitative and quantitative research methods by conducting an online survey and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Through a combination of the findings of qualitative and quantitative methods, this study intends to showcase a complete picture of the experiences and perception of Turkish academics. This approach will first establish the hypothesis of the thesis through an overview detailing the findings and characteristics derived from survey responses. Then, this will be followed by qualitative data that facilitates capturing the nuances. More specifically, I will employ the Explanatory Design approach in this study as a mixed methods design consisting of two phases.

5.1. The Explanatory Design

As Creswell (2007, 71) explains, the Explanatory Design is used when data collected through qualitative methods are used to build upon quantitative data that is initially collected. This design is ideal for studies where qualitative data is necessary to elucidate the initial findings. It can also be employed when researchers aim to group participants based on quantitative results and then conduct further qualitative research with these groups (72).

As a deductive approach, quantitative research allows collection of structured data, where there is already an existing knowledge about a phenomenon. Through this method, the researcher has the opportunity to test the hypothesis (Bowling 2005, 190). As Goertzen (2017, 12) argues, quantitative research observes complex phenomena through variables. More importantly, it is more reliable to summarize and generalize its results.

On the other hand, the qualitative research is designed to raise questions about processes, instead of anticipating the consequences (Willing 2013, 9). This method prioritizes comprehending meaningful patterns and processes, and by doing so, it illustrates the world from the viewpoint of the participants involved in the study (Flick et al. 2004, 3). While quantitative studies depend heavily on a predetermined list of specific questions prompting organized responses with limited opportunity for open-ended answers, qualitative research relies on participants to provide detailed responses regarding how they have interpreted or constructed their experiences. In this regard, this approach is considered more humanistic and interpretive, as it recognizes the multi-faceted dimension of phenomena (Jackson et al. 2007, 25). Additionally, qualitative research can serve as a solid basis for quantitative research, especially in fields where there is limited understanding of the topic (Meadow 2003, 519). Regarding the experiences and perceptions of Turkish academics, I aim to look at Schengen visa barrier from the perspective of Turkish academics, through their own words.

In general, the findings derived from quantitative research reveal behaviors and trends. However, it is paramount to recognize that they do not provide insight into the underlying motivations behind people's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. In other words, quantitative research identifies patterns within data or study groups but does not explore the reasons behind these observed behaviors. To fill these knowledge gaps, qualitative approaches like focus groups, interviews, or open-ended survey questions are valuable. In essence, while the survey results will guide the formulation of interview questions, the data obtained through mixed methods will be collectively analyzed to identify connections, consistencies and disparities.

5.2. Survey

As one of the most common quantitative methods, the fundamental purpose of the survey is to collect data from a selected sample. Surveys are useful for observing patterns, establishing trends, demonstrating the links between variables (Bowling 2005, 190). In this survey, I employed snowball sampling, a method that involves identifying a small number of individuals who possess specific characteristics representative of the target population and then reaching out to their networks, which share similar characteristics (Lewin 2005, 25). I contacted my friends who are currently pursuing their PhD studies and asked them to distribute the survey link in their social media groups. Additionally, I reached out to my professors in Turkey and requested them to circulate the survey among their networks. Finally, I shared the survey link on Twitter to reach a wider and more diverse audience from different institutions.

5.2.1. Establishing Survey Criteria: Parameters and Selection Guidelines

Several criteria were established for survey participation in this study. Firstly, participants were required to not hold a residence permit in the Schengen area, even if they are not currently residing there, as this document enables entry into the Schengen zone without requiring a visa. Secondly, participants were required to not hold a Special Passport (Green Passport), as this document permits visa-free entry to the Schengen area for 90 days, thus potentially impacting their experiences with Schengen visa regime. Thirdly, participants were required to hold only a Turkish passport, enabling a focused examination of the Schengen visa regime's impact on Turkish citizens solely. Fourthly, participants had to be academics currently working and teaching in higher education institutions. This category encompassed teaching assistants, lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors. Additionally, doctoral students and candidates

were intentionally included in the sample, as they are highly likely to seek participation in academic events abroad to expand their networks and engage with colleagues in their field. In international academic mobility literature, doctoral students are usually considered within the category of academics and research participants (Shen et al. 2022, 1320). Apart from these, there were no additional criteria such as country of residence (except for the Schengen area), age, gender, or any other characteristic.

5.2.2. Survey Participants

Within three weeks, 48 individuals completed the survey, all meeting the criteria mentioned above. Consequently, all responses were included in the data analysis. To effectively capture the experiences of Turkish academics, my primary aim was to reach a diverse audience in terms of gender, age, and academic title.

Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Survey Participants

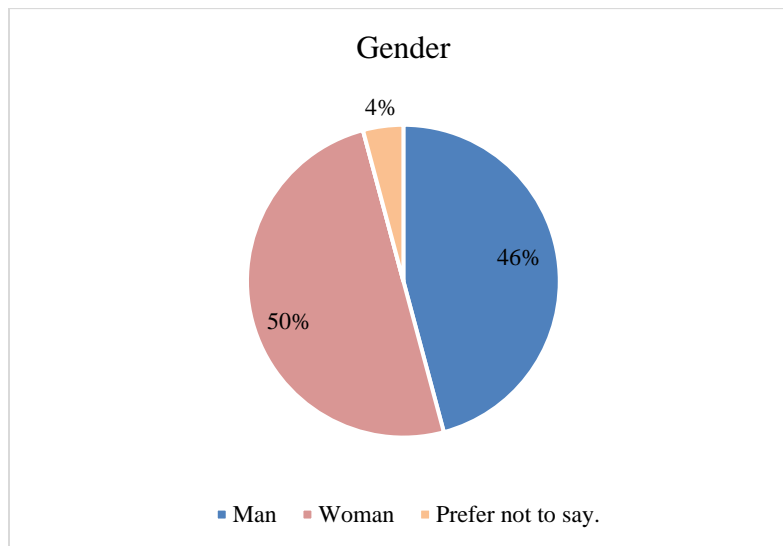
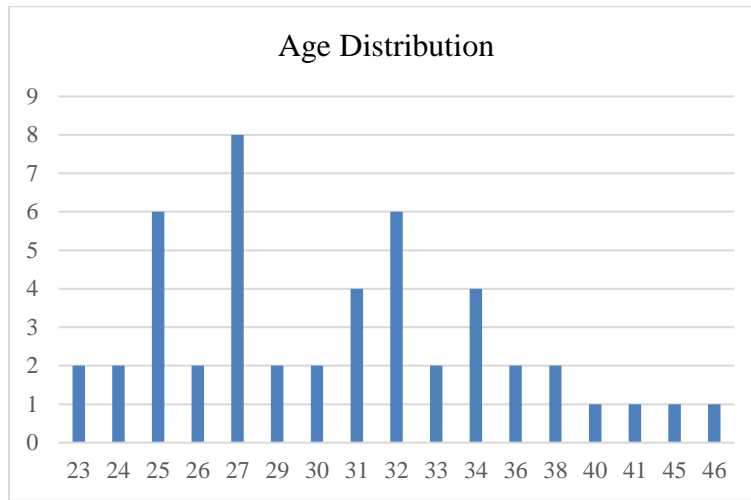


Figure 2: Age Distribution of the Survey Participants



While gender balance was achieved, the survey attracted a higher response rate from younger academics. This is likely due to the distribution of the survey within our social circles, which predominantly consist of individuals in our age group. However, this distribution approach did not compromise the research design, as all respondents met the established criteria.

Figure 3: Country of Residence of the Respondent

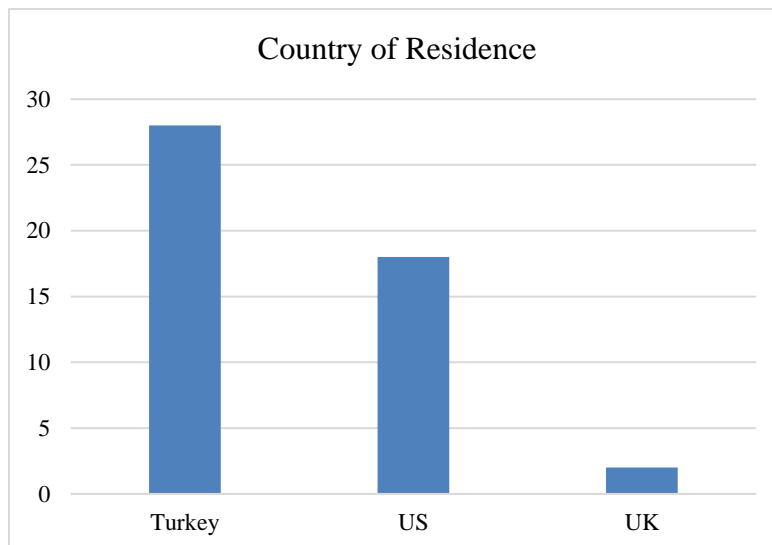
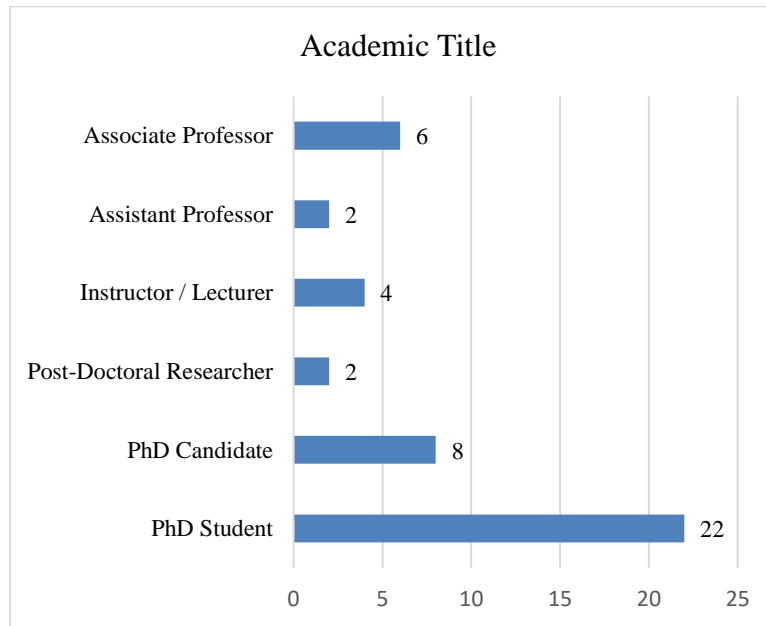


Figure 4: Academic Title of the Respondents



Half of the participants reside in Turkey, while the other half live in the US and the UK, which are the most sought-after destination countries for Turkish individuals outside of the Schengen area. Like the age distribution, the majority of respondents are doctoral students or candidates. As previously mentioned, including PhD students aligns with the research design parameters.

5.3. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

In particular, with in-depth semi-structured interview method, I aim to comprehend behaviors and actions, rather than measure them. The purpose of conducting interviews is to explore multi-faceted thoughts and emotions that a quantitative method could not capture. In general, it is believed that semi-structured interviews offer greater adaptability and responsiveness to emerging topics for the respondent (Jackson et al. 2007, 25). The interviews allow detailed and nuanced perspective towards a phenomenon. At the same time, I recognize the main limitation of

embracing this approach as the study will not be able to generalize the findings to a wider population of academics due to the limited number of participants involved in this study.

As discussed above, the difficulties in Schengen visa application process, alongside with increasing rate of rejections, constitute a barrier to Turkish academics who would like to participate in academic events within Schengen borders. Moving from this, I aim to cover the impacts of this burden on academics' career paths, their expectations, feelings and decisions on their role in the broader academic community. This method provided a unique opportunity to delve deeper into Turkish academics' individual experiences and perceptions. In the following section, the process of sourcing the interviews will be outlined and descriptive information about the interviewees will be provided briefly.

5.3.1. Locating Interview Participants

I utilized social media platforms, specifically Twitter and ResearchGate to connect with potential interviewees. I utilized the search bar on Twitter, focusing on keywords such as 'Turkish academic', 'Schengen visa denial', 'securing an appointment', 'visa for conference' and 'visa hustle'. This enabled me to discover tweets recounting the experiences of Turkish academics regarding Schengen visas. Subsequently, I reached out to these academics and sent interview requests to inquire about their experiences.⁶ My goal was to engage academics from various faculties and departments, aiming to enhance diversity in the study. Each interviewee is affiliated with a distinct institution, a deliberate choice aimed at minimizing bias.

⁶ The e-mail for interview request can be found in appendices.

5.3.2. Interview Process

Overall, I reached out to 13 academics via email. One of them already possessed a Special Passport (Green Passport) for a considerable period, thus not meeting the criteria. Another individual was occupied with conference. Six academics did not respond to my emails. Nonetheless, I extend my sincere gratitude to those who generously shared their time and insights in an open way for this study. Their contributions were invaluable in enriching our understanding of an ongoing problem that concerns all Turkish academics.

Table 2: Interview Participants

| ID | Sex | Academic Title | Department | Country of Residence |
|-----------|------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| A1 | M | Master of Science Student | Cognitive Psychology | Turkey |
| A2 | M | Assistant Professor | Political Science and International Relations | Turkey |
| A3 | F | Associate Professor | Psychology | UK |
| A4 | M | Professor | Business Administration | Turkey |
| A5 | F | Lecturer | Informatics | UK |

As mentioned, my objective in reaching out to potential interviewees was to ensure diversity among the participants, allowing for a range of perspectives to be heard. This was largely accomplished by selecting interviewees from various departments, different age groups, and with diverse academic titles.

All interviews were conducted via Zoom between April 21 and May 7, 2024. Prior to the interviews, the interviewees were sent a consent form⁷ requesting permission to record the meetings solely for the purpose of this thesis. Accordingly, the meetings were recorded and later transcribed for the analysis. In the following section will provide an analysis of the data collected from the online survey and the interviews.

⁷ The consent form can be found in the appendices.

6. Findings and Discussion

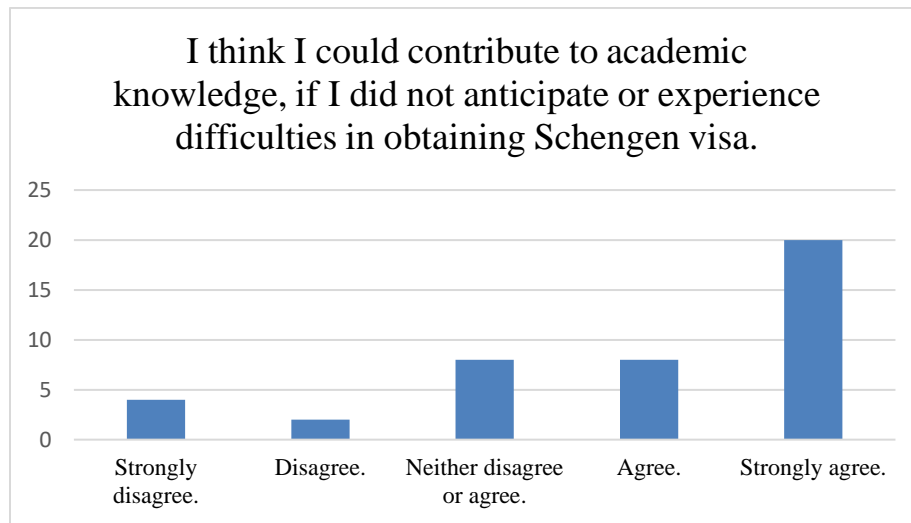
Analyses of participants of Turkish academics and students show that the Schengen visa barrier have complex impacts on the participants' academic career and their potential contribution to academic knowledge exchange. The findings revolve around following main themes: the impact of Schengen visa regime on academic knowledge exchange, the importance of academic travels, Turkish academics' perception of the EU and the feeling of being excluded. These themes were anticipated during the preparation of the survey questions, and they were significantly echoed during the interviews. Consequently, the responses provided to the survey questions were analyzed in alignment with the statements made by the interviewees.

6.1. Schengen Visa Barrier to Academic Knowledge Exchange

For many people, international academic events have become inaccessible due to the existence of borders (Nicolson 2018). In line with this, as the interviewees emphasize, visa regime can serve as a significant obstacle to meeting professionals and colleagues in one's field, particularly considering that the majority of academic events are held in the Global North. Such visa denials disproportionately affect academics from the Global South, creating barriers to their participation and collaboration on an international scale.

In the survey, participants were asked regarding their theoretical contributions to academic knowledge if they did not encounter or anticipate challenges in obtaining Schengen visas. As illustrated in the figure below, the majority of respondents expressed that they agree with the statement, suggesting that Turkish academics perceive the Schengen visa system as an obstacle and believe that academic knowledge could be expanded further in its absence.

Figure 5: Survey Results on Contribution to Academic Knowledge



The experiences of the interviewee A4 are particularly illustrative in this regard. Despite being a seasoned academic who had traveled to the Schengen area numerous times for academic purposes, A4 was shocked when his Schengen visa application following an invitation to a prestigious international conference in the Netherlands was rejected in 2018. This incident underscores the profound impact of visa restrictions on scientific development, given the indispensable role of collaboration in advancing scientific knowledge. In this regard, A4 commented on his visa denial:

The rejection of the visa was deeply disheartening. Despite my research as a scientist, my work has been recognized by peers in the field, who perceive it worthy of discussion at an international conference. It is important to remember that the evaluation of my work is conducted through blind peer review, where reviewers assess the quality and merit of my research without knowing my gender, nationality, or identity. However, during visa application process, all these aspects, including my payroll details, my age, gender, nationality, and even intimate family information, became decisive. Despite the

endorsement of my work by the scientific community and enduring such a humiliating period, my attempts to secure approval from a foreign consulate officer have proven unsuccessful and my visa application was rejected.

A4's comments shed light on the challenges faced by academics in navigating visa regimes and the broader implications for scientific progress:

The restriction of travel rights presents a significant hindrance to scientific development. The lack opportunities for collaboration and interaction blocks the progress of science. Science inherently thrives on collaboration, as it transcends borders and nationalities. However, from a geopolitical standpoint, these ideals are often not realized. Despite the universal nature of scientific inquiry, political boundaries and regulations impede the free flow of ideas and collaboration across borders. This discrepancy between the nature of science and geopolitical realities serves as a barrier to the advancement of knowledge and innovation.

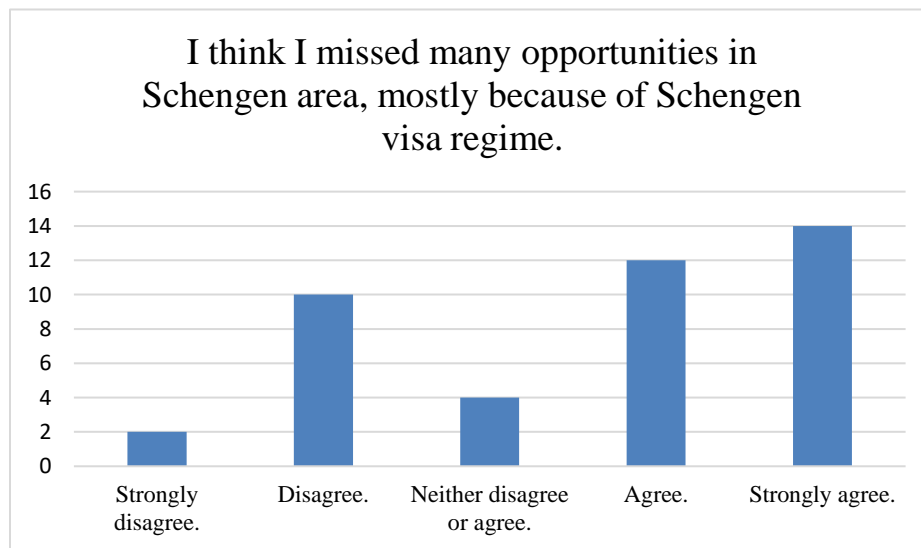
By looking at this, it can be suggested that academic travel fosters mutual enrichment and collaboration, thus, visa regimes remain a barrier to such developments. This statement also suggests that Turkish academics may feel discouraged from participating in academic events in the Schengen area due to visa barriers, despite being welcomed by prestigious conferences or workshops. Similarly, A3 reflected on missed opportunities:

Following our challenges with the Schengen visa process, we now decline conference invitations citing our reluctance to participate due to visa struggles.

This statement clearly highlights that the Schengen visa regime continues to act as a barrier for academics wishing to participate in events within the Schengen area. Regardless of the prestige

of the academic event, its potential impact on the personal career development of academics, and the potential contributions of academics to the event, some members of academia forego opportunities due to the anxiety induced by visa regulations. Overall, while conferences in the Global North theoretically invite participants from around the world, it can be inferred that they remain predominantly exclusive to academics from the Global North in practice. The survey results corroborate the statements made by the interviewees regarding missed opportunities.

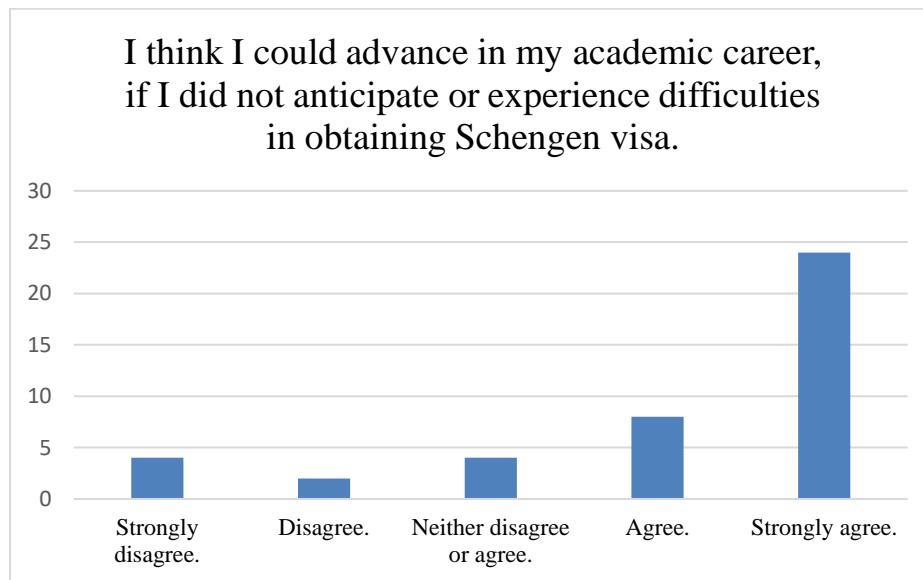
Figure 6: Survey Results on Perceived Missed Opportunities



The statements of interviewees and the figure from the survey above justify Kochenov's analysis of citizenship. As he argues, the citizenship excludes "many who are caged within steep visa walls in 'their' blood spaces of no opportunity" (Kochenov 2023, 4). From this perspective, visa denials and all the procedure that discourage many people from applying visa facilitate creation of a bubble in Schengen area, excluding Turkish academics and many others from the opportunities. On the other hand, this exclusion prevents developments in science and academia.

Furthermore, the survey results reveal that Schengen visa regime does not only hinder collaborations and scientific development, but also constitute an impediment to academic career of the scholars.

Figure 7: Survey Results on Contribution to Academic Career



As depicted in the figure above, the majority of respondents view the Schengen visa regime as a hindrance to their career aspirations. Given that participation in prestigious academic events is a crucial criterion expected of academics, visa regulations diminish the prospects for such opportunities, even if the academics are sufficiently qualified to be invited to conferences or congresses.

On the other hand, A4 also added that while the issue of visa restrictions may seem limited in scope, its impact on academics is quite widespread:

While the number of individuals directly prevented from participating in international academic events due to visa restrictions may be relatively small, the stress experienced by those navigating these requirements while pursuing academic work is widespread. In the

case of Turkish academics, virtually all of us are affected by this stress, which significantly impacts our ability to engage in academic activities. The anxiety we experience as academics is constant, exacerbated by the financial burden imposed by application fees, delays, and other related expenses.

The statements of A4 illustrate that while academics constitute a small portion of society and may be overlooked due to their size, the Schengen visa regime remains a barrier for all members of academia, except for those who hold a Special Passport or residence permit. Nevertheless, given the potential contribution of these academics to knowledge exchange, the impact could be remarkably greater than anticipated. Lastly, in an open-ended question on the survey allowing the participants to share their thoughts and feelings about the issue, the respondent highlighted the importance of facilitating travels for scientific community:

Visa liberalization is especially important for the international dissemination of information. Therefore, the free movement of scientists should be ensured in the easiest way possible.

As emphasized by the survey participant, ensuring visa liberalization is perceived as a vital step in facilitating the flow of academic knowledge across borders.

6.2. Fostering Academic Mobility and Understanding its Significance

As mentioned earlier, participation in academic events such as conferences, workshops or seminars contribute to academic knowledge exchange. This knowledge exchange has two essential dimensions, one from a broader perspective that focuses on the developments in academia, and the other one from a narrower perspective that prioritizes academics' self-development in their career and capabilities. In light of this, one major theme that I identified particularly during the interviews

was the way Schengen visa application process constitutes a barrier to innovations in academic knowledge globally and academics' personal developments in their career. A4 reflected on personal experiences with such travel and the historical context:

In my academic life, I traveled to Europe for various purposes, including internships, participation in scientific competitions, and exchange studies. During these trips, I never had to obtain a visa, allowing me to fully focus on my work, experiences, and interactions with colleagues. However, the introduction of the visa system changed this. If you examine history, you will find that Pythagoras traveled to Italy and continued his work there, while Euclid developed his theories through discussions with international colleagues. Throughout history, scientific travel has been crucial, often occurring without bureaucratic obstacles. Regardless of nationality, scientists were welcomed and valued in other countries. Today, however, the situation is vastly different.

With regard to the international conferences' contribution to his own personal career, A1 commented that:

The conference I was invited to comprised 100 individuals, all of whom I aspire to meet in person at some point in my career. These participants are esteemed professionals in their respective fields, having studied at prestigious universities and recognized by virtually everyone involved in this area of study. However, due to my visa rejection, I missed the invaluable opportunity to network and engage with these influential figures.

It is important to note that interviewee A1 had to participate in the conference virtually and notably, among the 100 participants, he was the sole individual in this circumstance. The practice of joining virtually has become increasingly common, especially after the Covid-19 crisis, as in-

person meetings posed a risk of virus transmission. This shift was not limited to international academic events but also extended to national ones. Regardless of participants' locations, everyone joined meetings via online platforms, resulting in a screen filled with faces and blurred backgrounds. This trend has persisted post-pandemic due to the convenience and cost-effectiveness of virtual events.

Thus, one might argue that virtual conference participation should not be an issue, given its prevalence in our daily lives. Virtual meetings are considerably cheaper, eliminating expenses like transportation and accommodation. Moreover, they could offer a viable option for academics from the Global South who face challenges in traveling to the Global North due to financial constraints or bureaucratic hurdles.

However, this perspective is problematic, as this line of argument overlooks the broader issue of global injustice that restricts freedom of movement and the right to travel. Instead of offering solutions to facilitate the exercise of this freedom, it legitimizes the current practice that restricts the travel on unjustified grounds. Regarding this dimension of the argument, A1 has commented that:

The most frustrating aspect of the visa denial was not simply participating in the conference virtually, but rather being *compelled* to do so. It underscores the importance of being able to pursue opportunities when and how you desire.

This statement underscores the importance of viewing travel as a fundamental right that should be exercised unless there are legitimate reasons preventing it. In the same vein, A2 shared his experience with virtual meetings:

I do not believe that online meetings can fully replace in-person gatherings. Even during my online lectures, I have encountered instances where we could not even see the faces of the students. Similarly, academic events cannot effectively be conducted virtually. Traveling abroad stimulates academics. Being physically present allows academics to experience the environment, visit libraries, explore campuses, and more. Academic meetings are not solely about the production of academic knowledge. There have been numerous occasions where I have met other academics and fostered collaborations. For instance, one academic invited me to another conference, which led to reciprocal invitations and even collaborative writing projects like book chapters. Additionally, at academic events, there are opportunities to interact with editors of prestigious journals at journal stands. These encounters allow for networking and the exchange of contact information, which can lead to future opportunities. Moreover, in-person events benefit smaller institutions in rural areas, as they become more visible and connected within the academic community.

Similar to the previous interviewee, A4 explained why virtual meetings would not substitute in-person meetings:

While virtual conferences offer a convenient platform for presenting work and engaging with speakers of interest without the logistical challenges of visas, they fail to replicate the full richness of academic exchange. As academics and intellectuals, we recognize the importance of synergies and insights gained from understanding the perspectives of colleagues from diverse backgrounds. These interactions inspire and shape our work, allowing us to grasp the sensitivities of others and identify areas worthy of further exploration. It is through these informal conversations, such as those during coffee breaks,

that we come to appreciate our shared intellectual mindset and foster meaningful exchanges. Without these opportunities for genuine connection and understanding, the full potential of intellectual exchange is not realized, hindering the advancement of universal science.

A3's statements further confirm the aforementioned pattern. A3 emphasizes the benefits of attending academic events in person, stating:

The online option should be a standard offering in academic conferences, primarily for environmental reasons. Not all academic events necessitate in-person attendance. However, I cannot overlook the advantages of face-to-face meetings, especially recalling my time as a PhD student. I had the opportunity to connect with numerous colleagues not only during formal events but also through informal gatherings post-conference. These interactions led to countless collaboration opportunities and the development of ideas for new projects, which would not have been feasible virtually. Only those attending my online presentation would have been aware of my work. Therefore, the networking opportunities and community building facilitated at cafes and pubs are invaluable for all academics, and this privilege should not be exclusive to those in the Global North.

In particular, A5 addressed the importance of participation in academic events for doctoral students:

Especially for a doctoral student, it is vital to engage in networking because it is the way to secure a post-doctoral position. The other meetings or conferences that academics attend may not be as crucial as for PhD students. During my studies, I have also taken advantage

of the academic events that I participated before. Thus, I would like all of my students to be able to access these opportunities.

Additionally, international academic events have considerable benefits for academics. For example, participation to international conferences is part of criteria to become associate professor. However, this is not the only intention of academics who pursue academic events abroad. In this regard, A2 shared his motivation:

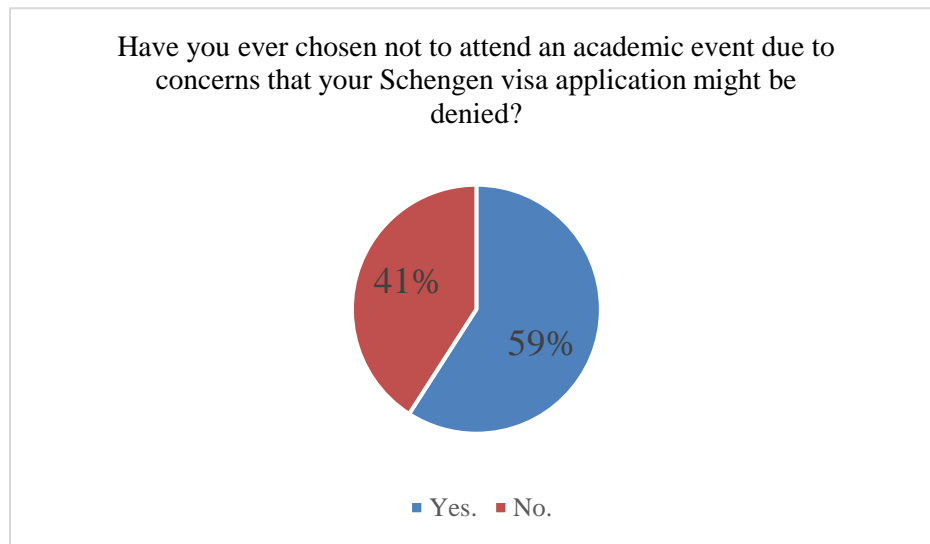
I participate in international academic events to explore new books and articles published in my field of interest, to engage with fellow academics, forge friendships, and challenge myself to grow and expand my capacities. These expectations need to be raised by civil society.

6.3. Navigating Visa Application Processes: Insights and Experiences

Another prominent theme that emerged during the interviews was people's reluctance to engage with the Schengen visa application process, compounded by the financial burdens it entails. This is line with Harpaz' analysis of contemporary citizenship concept. Harpaz (as cited in Kochenov 2022, 5) argues that while a slave could buy freedom in ancient times, third-country nationals must invest time, talent, and money to acquire a 'compensatory citizenship'. In this case, it is not even a citizenship which has permanent benefits, but a temporary visa that is often granted for weeks or even days. The insights of survey participants and interviewees express how much money and time they invested in obtaining a Schengen visa.

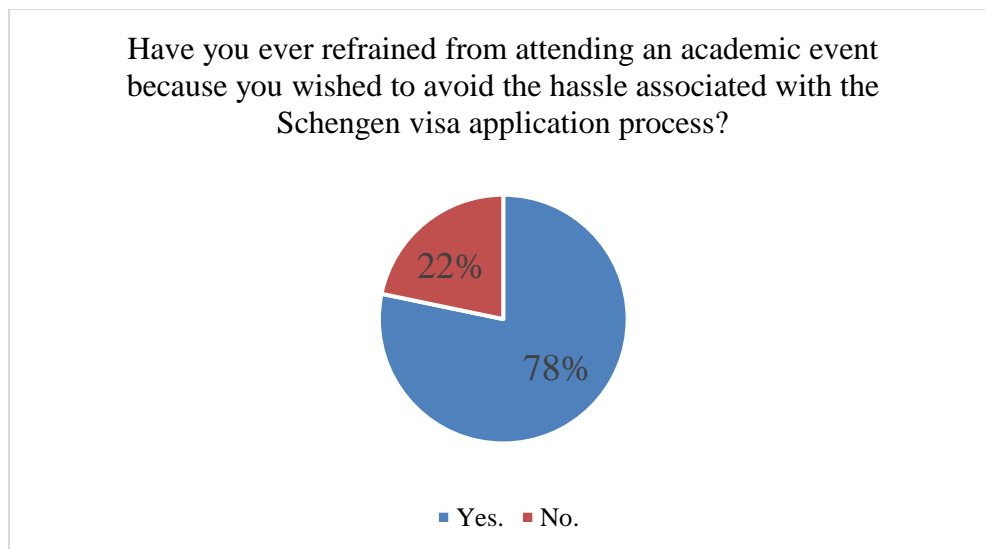
In the survey, the majority of the respondents highlighted that they occasionally refrain from participating an academic event because of the fear that their visa will be denied.

Figure 8: Survey Results on Concerns Regarding Visa Denials



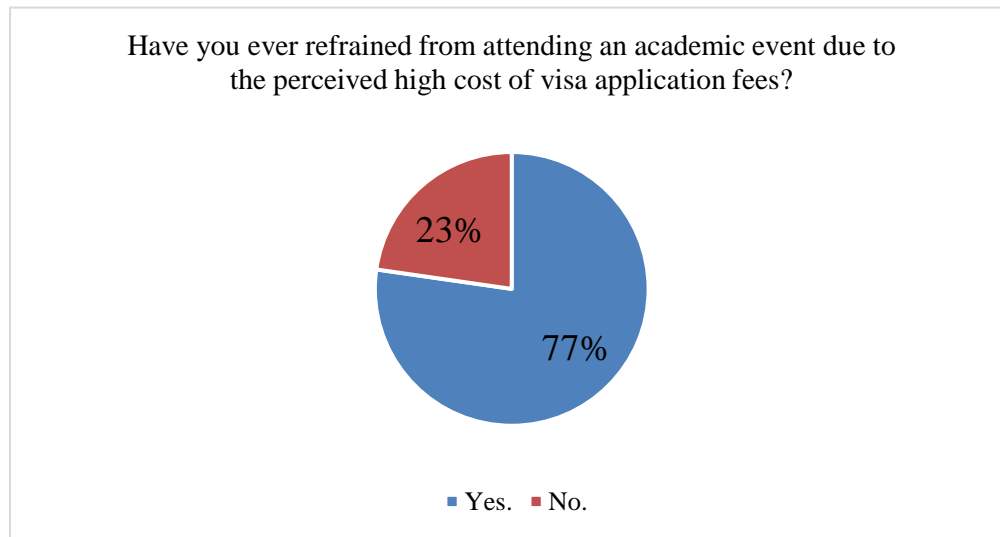
More importantly, many academics underscored that they opted out of attending an academic event to avoid the complexities related to the Schengen visa application process.

Figure 9: Survey Results on Concerns Regarding Visa Application Challenges



Similarly, the perceived exorbitant expenses associated with visa application fees have also been decisive in discouraging the respondents from attending academic events in Schengen area.

Figure 10: Survey Results on Concerns Regarding Application Fees



Many participants expressed feeling burdened by the requirement to provide extensive documentation and pay high application fees. For some, the process was described as not just a burden but even as "a trauma," echoing the sentiments expressed by interviewee A1. He continued:

Following the denial of my visa, the embassy requested an additional fee for a re-evaluation of my application. What puzzled me was the absence of any request for additional documents. It begs the question: why would the outcome be different this time if the same exact documents were to be re-evaluated? It is merely unjust to pay for the re-evaluation of documents that had already been submitted recently.

When asked about appeal option, A4 commented that:

Upon receiving the refusal, I chose not to prolong this humiliating process by appealing the decision. I had already submitted all the requisite documents, including the invitation letter and references, and felt that further appeal would be futile in such circumstances.

The comments of A4 on visa system itself were crucial as he addressed social inequalities:

The necessity of acquiring a visa is inherently distressing and it serves as a stark reminder of the disparities and imbalances between nations. Despite demonstrating my qualifications as a scientist, the consulate reserves the authority to deem me insufficiently qualified, highlighting the arbitrary nature of such judgments.

Furthermore, as highlighted by A4, being an academic from an economically disadvantaged country exacerbates challenges:

In academia, institutions typically offer financial support for scientific travel. However, a significant portion of this support is often consumed by visa application expenses alone. The cost of visa fees frequently surpasses even the expenses associated with travel. When factoring in accommodation and other incidentals, it becomes exceedingly challenging to attend more than one international conference in a year. Additionally, the constant uncertainty surrounding visa approval adds an extra layer of stress and humiliation to the process. This uncertainty also complicates logistical planning, as I cannot book flight tickets and accommodation in advance, leading to increased costs. Rather than focusing solely on preparing for my presentation and enhancing my work, I find myself preoccupied with navigating these logistical hurdles due to visa uncertainty.

Additionally, A4 pointed out the inherently stressful nature of the process from the outset:

By nature of these international academic events, we are usually informed two months before the meetings. In the meantime, while academics in Schengen can focus on their work and presentations, we are struggling with visa application and other logistics. There has never been a case where I could not secure a visa appointment before a conference, yet the

period has consistently been marked by stress and chaos, particularly as the conference date approaches.

A senior lecturer in the UK, A3, recounted her struggle to secure a Schengen visa appointment:

My husband and I, both lecturers in the UK, had planned to attend the two international conferences in Italy and Greece in July. By April, all visa appointment slots were fully booked in London, Manchester, and Edinburgh. Only one slot remained for June 17 for the Greek visa, which I reserved as a precaution. After explaining our situation to the Consulate General of Italy, they offer a slot for May 27.

The experiences of A3 and her husband shed light on another aspect of the issue: the challenge of securing a visa appointment. This illustrates that some individuals are not even given the opportunity to participate in academic events, regardless of their preparation and financial readiness. Despite academics' efforts to compile documents and demonstrate financial stability, consulate operations may prevent academic mobility altogether. The response provided by a survey participant, when asked about their experience with Schengen visa application, aligns with the experiences shared by interviewee A3. Here's the statement from a PhD student in Washington DC:

I realized that it is much easier to attend conferences for me around East Coast (New York, Boston, DC or Virginia - Maryland area) than other places since I live in Washington DC. Also, it is easier to find visa application appointment in the consulates located in US compared to the Consulates located in Turkey.

In the same vein, A5 addressed how small delays in the organization process of a conference results in difficulties to secure a visa appointment:

Sometimes the organizer of the conferences postpones notification deadlines for submitting the work. In these cases, there remains very limited times for securing an appointment.

As highlighted by participants, securing a visa appointment remains a significant challenge for many individuals, underscoring a notable visa barrier for academics. Unfortunately, the challenges do not cease once a visa appointment is secured. A3 later highlighted the challenges of preparing visa documents, as well as exorbitant application fees:

Our document preparation was exhaustive, totaling 104 pages, 52 per person. This extensive printing contributes significantly to environmental concerns. Moreover, visa fees are exorbitant and inequitable. Whether applying for a 3-day single-entry or 1-year multiple-entry visa, the fee remains around 130€. Transportation costs further burden applicants, given the limited number of application centers in the UK.

Her experience highlighted the rarity of having a visa application deemed inadmissible, rather than rejected:

On June 14, after three weeks of waiting, our visa application was deemed inadmissible without any given reason. Despite planning a longer stay in Italy than Greece, and even though the port of entry was Italy, we were instructed to reapply through the Consulate of Greece, a near-impossible task given the looming conference start date. Efforts to appeal this decision were met with silence. I opted out of the conference in Italy, hopeful for a visa from Greece to attend the conference there. My husband, on the other hand, re-submitted the application to the Italian Consulate, and managed to secure an appointment for June 20,

exactly a day before the conference. Surprisingly, he received a visa within 12 hours, granting him a 3-week multiple-entry permit. My Greek visa, issued for 11 days, arrived the following week. All this hassle, uncertainty, and anxiety mirrors the disparities faced by academics in Global South.

As can be interpreted from the statements, A3 and her husband's experience underscores the stress associated with applying for a Schengen visa. One scholar could not participate in an academic event simply because they could not book a visa appointment in a timely manner, and their application was not accepted by the Italian consulate, even though they met all the criteria. Even more sadly, A3 concluded her experience with her and her husbands' reluctance to participate academic events in Schengen area:

My husband and I have made the decision to refrain from participating in academic events in Schengen countries until we obtain British citizenship. We are determined to avoid the visa struggles we have faced in the past.

Similarly, A2 mentioned about the difficulties that arise when obtaining service passport⁸ as academics:

We often require approval from the institution in Turkey that we are affiliated with, although this is not consistently granted. There have been instances where our applications have been rejected by the deanery. This has posed challenges, particularly in attending prestigious international conferences like PSA or ISA, due to either deanery rejection or lengthy waiting periods. Even if we obtain the approval, we still need to navigate

⁸ This type of passports is given for persons who are sent abroad on behalf of the state, but they are not diplomatic passports.

administrative procedures. We must obtain the necessary paperwork from administrative units, then schedule an appointment for a service passport, which can take months. In the meantime, there is a risk of missing the conference. These factors collectively make the process very difficult.

6.4. The Feeling of Being Excluded and Changing Perception of the EU

Support amongst the population for Turkey's EU membership remained robust during the early 2000s, coinciding with the onset of accession negotiations. However, data from Eurobarometer indicates a significant decline, with the percentage of Turkish citizens favoring EU membership dropping from 75% in 2001 to 33% in 2015, the lowest among all candidate countries (European Commission, 2002; European Commission, 2015 as cited in Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). Similarly, the World Values Survey conducted in 2013 revealed that while the average trust in the EU among 32 surveyed countries remained around -8%, in Turkey it stood at -37%, markedly higher than the global average (Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). This growing skepticism towards the EU among Turkish society is a prominent trend observed among interviewees.

One interviewee, a Master of Science student in Psychology, experienced a Schengen visa rejection due to ‘serious doubts about his intention to return home country’. The applicant previously had successful visa applications for internships in Germany. Following his acceptance to a competitive conference in Estonia in 2023, where the applicant provided extensive documentation, including an acceptance letter, salary statements, and invitations from conference organizers, the visa was rejected just three days before the conference. A1 expressed frustration during the interview, stating:

My perception of justice was profoundly disrupted. Instead of sadness, I was overwhelmed with anger. I perceive the European Union's stance as hypocritical, advocating for human rights yet failing to apply them to us. The rejection of my visa application served as yet another manifestation of this injustice.

Another interviewee, A2, criticizes the unprofessional and unorganized structure of the EU in granting visas to certain nationalities:

Some of us have been granted 'service passports' (grey color), which allow us to travel to the Schengen area without a visa. However, I have heard that individuals with service passports encountered difficulties when entering the Schengen area, particularly if their passports were due to expire within 3 months. Such cases indicate that the decision ultimately rests with the officers reviewing the documents. This situation is truly disheartening.

With regard to politicization of Schengen visa by the European Union, A2 stated:

The European Union's use of the visa regime as a tool against Turkey is unacceptable. It appears that the Union's primary concern does not lie with academic or scientific pursuits, especially in the realm of social sciences. Social science is often regarded merely as a tool for generating and legitimizing discourses. It seems that, at present, the EU no longer prioritizes democracy or freedoms; rather, these decisions seem to be purely political in nature. Despite numerous promises made by the EU regarding visa liberalization, it is evident that there are double standards at play. As an academic, I find this situation to be humiliating.

This sentiment aligns with existing literature, particularly in studies on rising euroscepticism in Turkey. Yilmaz's survey on negative discrimination found that 45% of Turkish respondents believed the EU treated Turkey with double standards (2011). Similarly, A1 highlights the perceived hypocrisy of the European Union towards Turkish citizens, irrespective of their educational or professional backgrounds, by denying visas even for academic purposes.

On the other hand, A3 pointed out the selectiveness of Schengen visa regime that is applied arbitrarily, stating:

The European Union, along with the Global North at large, appears to be advocating for "selective permeability," which limits the number of individuals allowed to enter their borders. Those selected are expected to demonstrate financial security and provide compelling reasons for returning to their home country. However, it is unclear whether governments aim to change these circumstances, and if so, who stands to benefit from such changes.

These findings are in line with Kochenov's comments on the EU's legal framework on migration. As he argues, the legal structure in the EU is built upon the exclusion of non-EU citizens, by effectively denying them access to fundamental rights, principles, and even the territory itself, usually in a humiliating manner (Kochenov and Ganty 2023, 6). Hence, the impacts of this legal framework on Turkish side can be observed by looking at the statements of interviewees and survey results.

6.5. Exploring Further: Additional Insights on Visa Challenges

One other significant point raised during one interview was about visa consultancy firms. These entities have gained prominence in response to rising visa denial rates. Individuals seek their

assistance to circumvent minor errors that could lead to visa rejection. Furthermore, there have been allegations regarding the creation of bot software designed to manipulate the appointment systems of visa application centers. Reports suggest that agencies have implemented alert systems to procure appointments ahead of time, which they then sell at elevated rates to individuals seeking appointment slots (Bayir 2024). A2 touched upon this issue:

Various intermediary companies assist with Schengen visa applications, offering essentially the same services. However, people often pay substantial amounts to these companies in hopes of obtaining visas more easily and quickly. Even this highlights a significant issue within the Schengen system.

Similarly, A5 raised her concerns regarding data privacy when submitting her application to the intermediary companies:

Sharing all the documents that are about my private life with a stranger working in an intermediary company makes me feel uncomfortable. I would feel more comfortable if I would directly contact the consulate.

On the other hand, A5 also drew attention to the duration of visa issued:

As academics, we often participate in conferences or meetings. However, every time we apply for Schengen visa, even if it approved, it is usually issued for a very limited time, such as a week or 10 days. By nature of our work, it is apparent that we often travel for academic purposes. However, this is not well acknowledged, thus, we have to apply for visa each time, again and again. This is also strange as the consulates behave as if we are applying for the first time whenever we apply, even though we have submitted the same exact documents recently.

6.6. Proposed Strategies: Addressing Visa Barriers for Turkish Academics

At the end of the interview, the participants were asked about potential solutions to this issue, namely, how to facilitate academic mobility from Turkey to Schengen area, particularly for short-term academic visits. It is acknowledged that visa regime is multi-layered, hence, it is not an easy task to come up with sharp solutions. However, it is still vital to hear the proposals and potential solutions of the victims of the visa regime. In this regard, A2 proposed the establishment of a separate category within the Schengen system specifically designed for academics:

Turkey, although not an EU member, is a candidate country and a member of the Council of Europe. Given this status, Turkey could potentially be granted certain privileges regarding visas, especially for academics. There could be a distinct category within the Schengen system specifically tailored for academics. It is reasonable to argue that academics should not be subject to exorbitant fees for visa applications, as such travels mutually benefit both sides.

Similarly, A4 proposed the introduction of a specific visa category tailored for academics and scientists, highlighting the disparity in the current visa application process. A4's recent experience applying for a UK visa revealed options such as "sportsman" and "businessman," yet there was no dedicated category for academics and scientists. This led him to raise this question:

Are academics and scientists not as worthy as these individuals? Individuals engaged in scientific pursuits should have the option to select their own profession when applying for visas, rather than being relegated to a generic tourist category. Even if not a long-term solution of visa liberalization, the establishment of a distinct visa category for academics

and scientists would greatly facilitate the process and acknowledge the unique nature of their work and contributions.

The strategy proposed by A5 included granting visa at the border or electronic visa:

There could be a document list and academics can be granted visa once they demonstrate these visas at the border, instead of securing a visa appointment before months in advance. There are examples of such practices. This could be applied for academics in particular, especially if they have invitation letter from internationally recognized conferences.

A3 emphasized the importance of raising awareness among intellectuals in the Global North:

My colleagues in the UK seemed indifferent to the stress I experienced during the visa application process. Despite my attempts to convey the financial and emotional toll, they struggled to grasp the extent of the issue. It is clear that those with passport privileges are often unaware of such bureaucratic obstacles. Hence, addressing visa barriers necessitates raising awareness among individuals in the Global North.

The interviewees also emphasized the importance of international conferences announcing their programs and participants earlier. This would allow academics to prepare everything in advance, reducing stress and ensuring smooth participation. Regarding the role of organizers of international academic events, A3 emphasized:

Previously, announcements for academic events were made much closer to the starting date. Academics from the Global South advocated for more lead time, which prompted committees to extend deadlines. We also pressed for online participation as an option for

those facing bureaucratic obstacles. While organizers may be hesitant due to technical requirements, such as a room with a projector, this should be viewed as a last resort to ensure inclusivity.

Moreover, the survey concluded with an open-ended question soliciting participants' thoughts, emotions, and feedback. One respondent offered a potential solution to the visa issue for academics:

I think that all research assistants should be granted a Special Passport. It is unacceptable that lecturers or regular civil servants whose main duty is not to conduct research have the right to a Special Passport, but research assistants are deprived of this right.

This response sheds light on the predicament faced by academics who are not yet eligible for a Special Passport, typically early-career and young individuals. However, interviewee A3 emphasized the unjust foundations inherent in the concept of Special Passport:

The Green Passport (Special Passport) is unique in its kind. The Republic of Turkey categorizes its citizens hierarchically, implying that individuals working for the state are more trustworthy. Instead, emphasis should be placed on strengthening the regular passport through foreign policy.

7. Conclusion

In the face of horrifying atrocities unfolding worldwide, the matter of academics' mobility might appear insignificant. However, these circumstances mirror a broader trend of global visa regime that politicizes and racializes borders, and indicate a global injustice for the Global South (Dixit 2021, 70). The primary motivation of this study is to draw attention to this global injustice currently experienced by Turkish citizens and academics in particular.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the challenges faced by Turkish academics regarding Schengen visa applications and their impacts on academic mobility and knowledge exchange. Through a mixed-methods approach, the Explanatory Design in particular, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the thesis aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of Turkish academics' experiences and perceptions.

The paper argues that the significant increase in the refusal rates of Schengen visa applications for Turkish citizens over the years poses substantial obstacles to academic mobility and knowledge exchange. Despite initial optimism surrounding visa liberalization discussions, Turkey remains significantly distant from achieving this objective, with Turkish citizens experiencing lengthy wait times, high application fees, and extensive documentation requirements for visa applications. The data collected in this study reveals that visa barriers have considerable impacts on the advantages that could be gained from academic mobility. In particular, visa challenges impede knowledge exchange among institutions and academics by hindering opportunities for collaboration, co-authorship, collaborative project initiation and more. Furthermore, at the individual level, visa barriers restrict the self-efficacy of Turkish academics, depriving them of opportunities arising in the Global North. The study also established that the

Schengen visa barrier disproportionately affects early-career academics and doctoral students, who are eager to participate in international conferences and events to expand their networks and advance their careers. The study also highlights the urgent need for policy reforms to address the challenges faced by Turkish academics in obtaining Schengen visas. Governments should contemplate removing Turkey from the academic periphery, fostering potential collaborations between Turkish and European institutions and academics. Ultimately, such collaborations are poised to support regional relations even further.

Overall, the thesis utilizes Kochenov's 'citizenship apartheid' to understand how visa policies reinforces a hierarchical order based on privilege gained through the blood. In particular, the case of Turkish academics and Schengen visa regime demonstrates that even contributions to science and academia may not prevail over this apartheid regime.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, particularly regarding the lack of concrete reasons provided for Schengen visa denials. However, while some applications were justifiably rejected due to missing documents or unmet criteria, this does not account for the increase in rejection rates. Hence, these limitations do not impede the intended goals of the thesis, as the main purpose is to showcase how Schengen visa regime as an illustration of Kochenov's 'citizenship apartheid' affects academic knowledge exchange and access to information as a fundamental human right.

Moreover, future studies may explore the role of alternative visa policies on academic mobility, collaborative research projects, and co-authorships. Additionally, the potential impact of visa facilitation on various professions, such as medical professionals, students, artists, journalists, and entrepreneurs, can also be examined.

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Appendices

A. Email for Interview Request (Turkish and English Versions)

Merhaba,

Umarım sağlığını yerindedir ve iyisinizdir. Ben Nazlı, Viyana'da Orta Avrupa Üniversitesi'nde Uluslararası İlişkiler yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim.

Yüksek lisans tezim için bir röportaj talebine dair size ulaşıyorum. Araştırma konum Türk vatandaşlarının, özellikle de araştırmaları ve yayımlarıyla bilgi alışverişine katkıda bulunan akademisyenlerin, Schengen bölgesine seyahatlerindeki vize engelinin etkilerine odaklanıyor,. Vize rejiminin Türk akademisyenlerin mesleki hayatlarına, beklentilerine ve karşılaştıkları zorluklara etkisini araştırmak istiyorum.

Sizi Twitter'da paylaştığınız bu konuyla ilgili bir tweet aracılığıyla buldum. Eğer uygunsa, Teams veya Zoom üzerinden 20-30 dakikalık bir röportaj için katılımınızı rica ediyorum. Röportaj sırasında verdiğiniz bilgiler gizli tutulacak ve adınız veya size tanımlayıcı herhangi bir bilgi paylaşılmayacaktır. Tezim ve röportaj hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmek isterseniz, ek bilgi vermekten memnuniyet duyarım. İlginiz ve zamanınız için çok teşekkür ederim.

Saygılarımla,
Nazlı Tekdemirkoparan

Hi,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Nazlı, and I am currently pursuing a master's degree in the International Relations program at Central European University in Vienna.

I am writing to you to request an interview for my master's thesis. My research focuses on the impact of the Schengen visa barrier on Turkish citizens' travels to the Schengen area, particularly on academics who contribute to knowledge exchange through their research and publications. I am interested in exploring how the visa regime affects Turkish academics' professional lives, their expectations, and potential solutions to the challenges they face.

I came across a tweet you shared on Twitter related to personal experiences in this area, which is why I am reaching out to you. If you are willing, I kindly ask for your participation in a 20-30 minute interview via Teams or Zoom. Please be assured that any information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential and will not be associated with your name or any identifying information. If you would like to learn more about my thesis and the interviews, I am more than happy to provide additional details. Thank you very much for considering my request. I appreciate your time and assistance.

Best regards,
Nazlı Tekdemirkoparan

B. Participant Consent Form (Turkish and English Versions)

Katılımcı Rıza Beyan Formu

Gönüllü olarak, Viyana, Avusturya'da Orta Avrupa Üniversitesi'nde Profesör Boldizsár Nagy'nin denetiminde Nazlı Tekdemirkoparan tarafından yürütülen araştırma projesi kapsamında bir röportaja katılmayı kabul ediyorum. Bu röportaja katılımımın tamamen gönüllü olduğunu ve istediğim herhangi bir soruyu cevaplamayı reddetme veya röportajdan herhangi bir zamanda çekilme hakkına sahip olduğumu anlıyorum, ve bunun hiçbir ceza veya sonuç doğurmayacağını biliyorum.

- Röportaj 30 dakika sürecektir ve katılımı ilişkilendirilen öngörülen bir risk yoktur.
- Katılımcı olarak istediğim zaman röportajı durdurma veya araştırmadan çekilme hakkım vardır.
- Röportajdan yapılan herhangi bir özet içerik veya alıntı, akademik yayın veya diğer akademik mecralar aracılığıyla sunulduğunda, benim tanımlanmamamı sağlamak için anonimleştirilecek ve beni tanımlayabilecek diğer bilgilerin ortaya çıkmaması için özen gösterilecektir.

Tarih

İmza

Participant Consent Form

I voluntarily agree to participate in an interview within the scope of the research project conducted by Nazlı Tekdemirkoparan under the supervision of Professor Boldizsar Nagy at Central European University, in Vienna, Austria. I understand that my participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty or consequence.

- The interview will take 30 minutes and there is no anticipated risks associated with participation, but I have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Nazlı Tekdemirkoparan and academic colleagues whom she might collaborate as part of the research process.
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that I will not be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify myself will not be revealed.

Date

Signature