

Learning during a Pandemic: A Story from Turkey



Muhammad Zawil Kiram, an alumnus of Universitas Malikussaleh pursuing master's degree at Marmara University, Turkey. Foto; Ist

UNIMALNEWS | Istanbul - Muhammad Zawil Kiram arrived in Turkey 19 months ago on Turkish Government's *Türkiye Burslari* Scholarships to pursue his master's degree in sociology. Zawil is an alumnus of Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Universitas Malikussaleh who graduated in 2018. Before studying at Marmara University, Istanbul, he took one-year Turkish Language preparation program called *Türkçe Öğretimi Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi* as the instructional language at the university is Turkish. He was enjoying his second semester when the coronavirus broke out and on-campus teaching was suspended.

Turkish Government closed down schools and universities to enforce physical distancing which is considered as one effective measure to curb the spread of Coronavirus. Turkey is one of the countries in the world with the highest number of Covid-19 cases. According to the latest data from www.worldometers.info, per 16 May 2020, there have been 146,457 people infected with Coronavirus in Turkey and at least 4,055 people have died. Schools and university closures were deployed nationwide and study from home policy was enforced to make sure that teaching and learning process takes place amid the Coronavirus crisis.

To Unimalnews, on Monday (05/11/2020), Zawil stated that he has been studying online from home since the middle of March 2020. "In studying online, we use the online learning website provided by the university called *uzaktan eğitim sistemi*. In addition, we also use some video conferencing applications such as Zoom, Google Meet and Skype," Zawil said. Turkish Government has been supporting the students across the country by providing 8 GB cellular data per month for every student. "With the support from the government and also from campus, the teaching and learning process run well so far," he further added.

Zawil really hopes that the pandemic will end soon and everything will get back to normal again. As an international student, Zawil is looking forward to be more active in joining various programs such as conferences and seminars. However, due to Covid-19 outbreak, he missed some conference opportunities this year. "There are many online seminars at the moment for sure, but it would be very different if you can attend directly. The atmosphere is just different," Zawil told Unimalnews.

Zawil, who has also published one book during his study in Turkey, expects to be able to finish his study in 2021. Besides Zawil, Siti Arifa Diana is another Unimal alumnus who is also doing a master's degree in Turkey at Selcuk Universitesi in Konya. Siti also graduated from Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. **[kur]**

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