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Author(s):

Dilek Avcı 

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First year and adjustment in university life: A qualitative study to determine the needs of first year university students

Dilek Avci ^{*a} 



Article Information	Abstract
<p>DOI: 10.14527/edure.2024.04</p> <p>Article History: Received 15 December 2023 Revised 17 January 2024 Accepted 25 January 2024 Online 27 January 2024</p> <p>Keywords: Freshman, Freshman' needs, College adjustment.</p> <p>Article Type: Research paper</p>	<p>This study was conducted to identify the adjustment needs of first-year university students during their transition to university. The first year at university is a time when students review and organize their needs, their expectations from the university, the quality of their communication with other students, academic and administrative staff, the rules and working methods of the new academic environment, and the personality traits that students bring to the university. In the first year, most university students have to deal with many stress factors such as economic difficulties, academic difficulties, loneliness and homesickness, and difficulties in establishing social relationships. Based on this information, this study aims to explore in depth the needs and experiences of first-year university students in Turkey. In this study, the case study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used to determine the adjustment difficulties and first-year needs of first-year university students. The participants were asked 11 open-ended questions with a semi-structured interview form. Content analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis method, was conducted by creating themes and codes for the data obtained from the interviews. The findings from the research were discussed in the context of the literature.</p>



Introduction

Adaptation is a biologically based concept, rooted in the evolutionary perspective and emphasizing the relationship between the organism and the environment. Lyell first explained the concept of adaptation as a response to changing environmental conditions (Gale, 1972). Darwin (2009), on the other hand, dealt with adaptation on a biological basis under the concept of 'adaptation' in the theory of evolution. Psychological adaptation "adjustment" is a multidimensional concept that includes physical adaptation, which is emphasized in evolutionary theory. Psychological adaptation (adjustment) is generally defined as an individual's ability to establish and maintain a relationship with himself and his environment (Perls, 1969).

When considered from both psychological and biological perspectives, it becomes clear that the main emphasis in the concept of adjustment is the interaction established with changing environmental conditions and the degree to which this interaction is maintained (Perls, 1969). In this respect, adjustment is a dynamic process and it is provided by the responses developed by the individual to the changes in the environment. The degree of adjustment is determined by two basic factors. These are the personal characteristics of the individual and the situations encountered in the new environment (Geçtan, 2003). One of these environments is the university. Since the first year of university coincides with the beginning of the emerging adulthood period in terms of identity development, it is a critical period in terms of both lifestyle and identity development (Sidle & McReynolds, 2009; Arnett, 2016).

This new process is a time when first-year students review and adjust their needs (Hicks, 2005; Sidle & McReynolds, 2009), their expectations of the university (Carter, Locks, & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Swanson, Vaughan, & Wilkinson, 2017), the quality of their communication with other students, academic and administrative staff

* Corresponding author e-mail: dilekavcipdr@gmail.com

^a Faculty of Education, Hacettepe University, Ankara/Türkiye

(Swanson, Vaughan, & Wilkinson, 2017), the rules and working methods of the new academic environment (Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, & Purswell, 2008; Hurtado, Han, Sáenz, Espinosa, Cabrera, & Cerna, 2007), and the personality traits that students bring to university (Clark, 2005). For this reason, the first year at university is a critical process of adjustment with unique needs and characteristics that have implications not only for university life but also for adulthood (Clark, 2005; Patton, Renn, Guido, Quay, Evans, & Forney, 2016; Swanson, Vaughan, & Wilkinson, 2017; Tinto, 1993).

Although university adjustment has been explained by various approaches (Baker & Siryk, 1986; Bean, 1985; Tinto, 2017; Terenzini & Pasarella, 1978; Spady, 1970), Baker and Siryk (1986) provided the most comprehensive definition. Baker and Siryk (1986) defined university adjustment as a multidimensional concept consisting of four dimensions: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal/emotional adjustment, and goal achievement/institutional attachment. While academic adjustment involves the evaluation of academic goals, demands and efforts and the acceptance of the academic environment, social adjustment involves the student's participation in the social environment of the university by establishing supportive relationships and interacting effectively with the new social environment. While personal/emotional adjustment involves the student's psychological and physical well-being, the important elements of purposefulness/institutional attachment include being satisfied with being at university, and in particular with being at the university they attend, and making effective use of university resources (Baker & Siryk, 1986). Needs, on the other hand, are defined as the absence of important conditions necessary for the development of the individual and his/her relationship with his/her environment (Kuzgun, 2000). Maslow (1954) explains the basic needs of individuals in terms of physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. Physiological needs are the first level of Maslow's pyramid and express physiological needs. The need for safety refers to the individual's avoidance of fear and uncertainty; the living space that he/she can control and feel safe in (Maslow, 1970). The need for love and affiliation refers to the individual's need to be a member of a group, to love and be loved. Failure to meet this need leads to psychological disharmony and psychopathology. Another level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the need for esteem (Maslow, 1970). This need is closely related to individual success, self-esteem and positive thoughts about oneself. Although the need for esteem motivates the individual for the future, it is largely satisfied by the individual's occupation and the work they do. In contrast to the basic needs, the need for self-actualisation, which is on the last level of the needs pyramid, relates to the full realisation of the individual's potential.

Deci and Ryan (2000), in their autonomy theory, prioritise psychological needs for learning, interpersonal relationships, and the role of the individual in the social and physical environment. These are the need for 'autonomy', to make one's own decisions about matters that affect the individual, the need for 'competence', to use and develop one's abilities, and the need for 'relatedness', to fit in with other people and to feel socially valued. When these needs are inhibited, motivation and performance are affected in a variety of ways. According to this theory, individuals work effectively and develop in a healthy way to the extent that these needs are met; when they are blocked, they lead to maladaptive behaviour and negative development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Murray (1938) defines a need as a structure that motivates behaviour. These structures, which motivate behaviour as overt or covert drives, can be objectified when they are expressed in overt behaviour (physical or verbal); on the other hand, when they do not lead to overt behaviour, they can take the form of desire and be transformed into the future, fantasy, imagination and artistic creation (Murray, 1938). Murray, like Maslow, emphasises that there are 20 different needs such as autonomy, conformity, achievement, aggression, submission, pleasure, intimacy and that these needs can be qualitatively distinguished in terms of tendency type, action type and object type (Murray, 1938).

When analysing the studies that have been carried out to identify the adjustment needs of university students and their expectations based on these needs, the limitation of studies to identify the needs of first year students comes to the fore. For example, Terenzini, Rendon, Lee Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg and Jalomo (1994) conducted a qualitative study to identify the sources of social support that facilitate the adjustment process of students during the transition from high school to university, asking the question "Who were the important people for you during the first year? As a result of the research conducted with 132 first year students, it was found that the support they received from faculty lecturers as well as from their families was very important for them in the adjustment process. Bueschel (2003) examined the factors that are effective in the university process in the project entitled "The Bridge Project: Strengthening K-16 Transition Policies" with a total of 1100 individuals in California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon and Texas, and conducted semi-structured focus interviews with faculty members, students and other staff. As a result of the qualitative interviews, they found that factors such as university recognition and academic success can change the profile of incoming students.

Keup (2007) conducted a qualitative study to identify the 'support myths' of first year students and conducted a qualitative study with nine students in their first year and first semester at university. As a result of the research, it was found that in terms of their expectations of university, first year students emphasised studies that would support their personal and interpersonal development. In addition to these areas, it was found that study expectations related to the acquisition of study skills and the responsibility to be proficient in the courses were emphasised. Mercan and Armağan Yıldız (2011) conducted a study to determine the most problematic areas of new students at the beginning of their studies and asked the students which three issues they would like to receive help from the university's PDR centre. The results of the study, which was conducted with 311 students from the Faculty of Education, showed that students wanted help with academic issues, career planning, time management, anger management, coping with stress and shyness. Bülbül (2012) conducted a qualitative study to determine the reasons for dropping out, interviewing 12 students who returned to university on amnesty and six lecturers who were studying in different faculties. The results of the study showed that academic adjustment problems and economic problems were the main problem areas for students dropping out of school.

Ciccione-Estrela (2012) conducted qualitative interviews with 40 first-year university students in a study of first-year university students in emerging adulthood. As a result of the study, it was highlighted that students' perceptions of family support and university support were the most effective factors in their first-year social adjustment. In a similar study, Kamara (2012) conducted a qualitative study with 31 first-year university students who participated in a first-year university adjustment programme. The students were asked about the barriers they encountered during their transition process, how the first-year adjustment programme was effective in addressing these barriers, and which adjustment programmes increased their commitment to the university. The research highlighted that they reported economic difficulties, the steps involved in communicating with university academic staff, and difficulties related to new academic study habits. However, another finding of the study was that the first year orientation programme was perceived as the most important source of support, especially in terms of acquiring new study habits and building confidence in communicating with academic staff. Sevinç and Gizir (2014), as a result of a qualitative study conducted with 25 first-year students with adjustment problems, identified the factors affecting students' personal-emotional, social, academic and institutional adjustment in terms of each area of adjustment. It was found that social adjustment was negatively influenced by the adequacy of friendships and cultural opportunities, academic adjustment by the quality of the relationship between lecturers and students and the professional qualifications of lecturers, and personal adjustment by factors such as loneliness, homesickness, fear of making mistakes and timidity. In addition, the inability to develop a sense of belonging and institutional identity for the university was also found to affect the adjustment of university students. McGhie (2017) conducted a qualitative study with 32 first-year students to determine the factors that make the transition to university successful. According to the results of the study, 20 of the 32 students primarily mentioned the importance of having informational resources, supportive friend groups, and information about university study habits in their adjustment to university. However, the same study also found that the difficulty of socialising, time management and keeping up with the academic structure of the university during the first year was a major source of stress. In a similar study, Thomas Schuster (2017) conducted a research to examine the factors that influence the adjustment process of first-year students. As a result of the research, it was found that the organisational culture, i.e. the organisational climate, is an important predictive factor for the adjustment level of first-year students. Accordingly, the importance of structured induction programmes was emphasised in order to familiarise students with the institutional culture.

As a result, changing environmental conditions also lead to changes in the nature of the needs of students entering university. On the other hand, the first year at university is not always a positive experience. Although many first-year university students come to university with optimism, high academic aspirations and expectations of a positive university experience, many experience difficulties in their second year and may even consider dropping out of university (Carter, Locks, & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Parks, Romo, Bradizza, & Hisieh, 2008). The majority of first-year students experience financial difficulties (Galambos, Howard, & Maggs, 2010), academic difficulties (Love & Thomas, 2014), loneliness and homesickness (Karin, Lisa, & Amritha, 2010; Mattanah, Brooks, Brand, Quimby, & Ayers, 2012; Paul & Brier, 2001; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Xiaoli, Yan, Chen, & Liu, 2009), difficulties in forming social relationships (Gray, Vitak, Easton, & Ellison, 2013; Hicks & Heastie, 2008; Paul & Brier, 2001; Shim & Ryan, 2012). Although there is a limited number of qualitative studies in the literature to determine the adjustment needs of university students, no study has been conducted in Turkey. However, due to the point-based university placement in Turkey, students' expectations from the university and their adjustment to the university may not always be realised at the desired level. On the other hand, the fact that students come to university from different socio-economic levels and cultural structures, and that not all universities have the same prestige and school culture, may lead students to feel

disappointment and pessimism in the first year and even think about transferring to another university (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Based on this information, this study aims to explore in depth the needs and experiences of first year university students in Turkey. It is expected that the findings of this study will serve as a source for studies on first year university students.

Method

Research Design

In this study, the case study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used to determine the adjustment difficulties experienced by first-year college students and their first-year needs. In case studies, a subject or a particular event is examined in detail (Paker, 2015). Case studies are defined as studies that aim to describe qualitatively using different data collection tools (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 13 first-year undergraduate students who were new to the university. Ten of the participants were female and three were male. The participants are studying in different departments of two universities located in two different cities in the same geographical region of Turkey. Purposive sampling method was used to reach the participants.

Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interview form

In the semi-structured interview form, which was prepared according to the purpose of the research and by using the literature, 11 open-ended questions were asked to the participants. The first question asked to the participants was "What are your first experiences at the university when you came to the university? The second question asked of the participants was, "What are the first emotions you felt when you came to college?" The third question was "What did you think positively and/or negatively about being a university student in your first year at university? The fourth question asked the participants was "What are your thoughts about the resources such as course variety, course intensity, instructors, etc. that are part of your academic life in your first year at university? The fifth question is "What would you say about your social life in your first year at university?" and the sixth question is "Where do you live? What do you think about where you live?" The seventh question is: "Did you participate in activities related to different communities (sports, etc.) at the university? If so, what kind of communities and activities did you participate in and how did you become aware of these activities? The eighth question is "What kind of expectations did you have of the university during your first year? The ninth question is "What kind of support did you need during your first year? Who or what did you turn to first for that support? The tenth question is "What kind of opportunities would you like to see the university provide for first-year students? The last question is "Please indicate if there are any thoughts that we have forgotten that you would like us to know.

Personal information form (PIF)

It was developed by the researchers to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. The questions on this form were asked during face-to-face interviews with the participants. Gender, university, and department information were obtained through the personal information form.

Data Collection

Participation in the study was based on volunteerism. The eleven open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview form were asked by the researcher through one-to-one interviews. During the interview, written notes were taken along with audio recordings. The audio recordings were transcribed and the answers were transferred to the computer. Each interview lasted 30-40 minutes.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were transferred to the computer and analyzed manually using the Microsoft Office program. The themes and codes related to the data were created and analyzed through content analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis method. Four stages were followed in the content analysis. 1. coding the data, 2. finding the themes, 3. organizing the codes and themes, and 4. defining and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Based on this, the responses obtained from the interviews were coded and themes were found. Then, the codes and themes were summarized and organized by the researcher. Frequencies and percentages were obtained by counting the codes. The results obtained were presented as findings.

Validity and Reliability Study

In studies using interview techniques, to ensure the validity and reliability of the data to be collected, "credibility," "transferability," "consistency," and "confirmability" strategies should be considered and practices should be conducted with the specified strategies (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Measures of credibility and triangulation were used to assess the validity of the study. Credibility is the extent to which the researcher's findings reflect the participants' statements (Sandelowski, 1986). In this context, to ensure the validity of the research, the researcher summarized the results of each interview and asked the participants about missing or unclear aspects. Another measure to increase validity in qualitative research is triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation uses themes and categories to find the common point in the process of creation. Within the triangulation, the method of "researcher triangulation" proposed by Denzin (1989) was used. In this context, the coding and themes of the transcripts were created by another expert in the field, and then the coding and themes were compared and finalized by the researcher. In order to ensure the reliability of the research, an information form about the research was created before the interviews and the participants were informed about the information form. Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted with two participants and then the interview form was finalized. During the interviews, notes were taken by the interviewer along with the audio recording and compared with the findings obtained. The findings obtained by the researcher were compared with the codes and themes obtained by an expert in the field and checked for consistency.

Results

The data collected in the study through semi-structured interviews were analysed through content analysis. The participants' expressions related to the themes obtained as a result of this analysis were counted and expressed as frequencies and percentages. This section presents the findings in relation to 11 questions posed to the participants.

Results Related to the Question "What Are Your First Experiences at the University When You Came to the University?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained regarding the first question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 1.

When the responses to the first question were analysed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under seven themes. The first three themes with the highest percentage were (1) having difficulties with course selection, (2) difficulties in reaching the university, (3) having difficulties due to not knowing the university and friends, and the theme with the lowest percentage was determined as (7) Economic difficulties and accommodation problems.

Results Related to the Question "What are the First Emotions You Felt When You Came to the University?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained regarding the second question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 2.

When the responses to the second question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under five themes. The first three themes with the highest percentages were (1) loneliness, (2) excitement, (3) anxiety, while the theme with the lowest percentage was (5) insecurity.

Table 1.

Participants' answers to the question "What are your first experiences at the university when you came to the university?".

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Having difficulties with course selection	13	20.30	P.5. "I did not understand anything about the ECTS system and I had difficulty, I was discouraged."
Not recognising campus facilities	10	15.60	P.8. "The campus was very big and I could not find my department, I had difficulties because I could not recognise the school."
Difficulties in accessing the university	12	18.75	P.5. "The road is very long and tiresome. It ruins my day."
Distance from family and longing for family	8	12.50	P.3. "Being away from my family. I am incredibly attached to my family. I rightly want to escape and go home at every opportunity. "
Having difficulties due to not knowing the university and friends	11	17.18	P.6. "Being unfamiliar with the university environment and not knowing anyone was very bad, especially in the first months."
Economic difficulties	5	7.80	P.1. "Since my Kyk scholarship was not paid immediately, I had a lot of economic difficulties in the first months."
Accommodation problems	5	7.80	P.6. "There was no dormitory, so I stayed in the guesthouse. If there hadn't been one, we would have frozen. You know the rents."
Total	64	100.00	

Table 2.

Participants' answers to the question "What are the first emotions you felt when you came to university?".

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Loneliness	12	27.90	P.4. "I felt very lonely because I had no friends and the university was too crowded and big for me."
Anxiety	9	20.90	P.10. "Since I had never been to Ankara before, I was worried about not knowing where and how to go."
Excitement	11	25.58	P.1. "When I found out that I won, the thought of living in a foreign city and in a foreign environment made me feel both excitement and fear."
Missing	7	16.27	P.5. "Being away from my family. I am incredibly attached to my family. I want to run away and go home at every opportunity."
Insecurity	4	9.30	P.3. "I had difficulty making friends because I had doubts about whether I could trust different people"
Total	43	100.00	

Results Related to the Question "What Did You Think Positively and/or Negatively About Being A University Student in Your First Year at University?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the third question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 3.

When the responses to the third question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under six themes. The top three themes with the highest percentages were (1) The complexity of the university academic system, (2) Not being able to cope with living in a different city, (3) Thoughts about not being able to make friends, while the theme with the lowest percentage was (6) Increased worries about the future.

Table3.

Participants' responses to the question "What did you think positively and/or negatively about being a university student in your first year at university?".

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Complexity of the university academic system	13	28.26	P.8. "It was challenging to adapt to the chaos of the university and the new education system.
The style and demeanor of the lecturers are important	6	13.04	P.11. "Definitely the attitude of the teachers. After all, this is a school and I need friendly, motivating and supportive teachers."
Thoughts about not being able to make friends	8	17.39	P.4. "Although it was crowded, I felt that I could not make fast friends with people and be among them"
Increased concerns about the future	3	6.52	P.1. "My concerns about my professional development increased. "
Not coping with living in a different city	11	23.91	P.13. "I came from a small place and I have never been in such a crowded environment before, so it is hard to get used to it."
The thought of not being able to make ends meet economically	5	10.86	P.2. "I am very worried about how I will make a living economically"
Total	46	100.00	

Results Related to the Question "What Are Your Thoughts about The Resources Such As Course Variety, Intensity of Courses, Lecturers, etc. That Were Part of Your Academic Life in Your First Year at The University?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the fourth question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Participants' responses to the question "What are your thoughts about the resources such as course variety, intensity of courses, lecturers, etc. that were part of your academic life in your first year at the university?".

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Confusion of the grading system	13	36.11	P.13. "It is very different from high school in terms of exams and grades, so I had a lot of difficulty in the first exams"
The need for support from lecturers	4	11.11	P.9. "I expected the professors in the program to be more informative and supportive."
Difficulties in course selection	9	25.00	P.11. "I had difficulty understanding the system in which we choose courses."
Need for information on how to contact lecturers	10	27.77	P.1. "I don't know the level of relationship of the professors with us, their limits, at which points I can act individually and at which points I can act consultatively."
Total	36	100.00	

When the responses to the fourth question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under four themes. The top three themes with the highest percentages were (1) the complexity of the grading system, (2) the need for information on how to communicate with instructors, (3) difficulties in course selection, while the theme with the lowest percentage was (4) the need for support from instructors.

Results Related to the Question "What Do You Share about Your Social Life in Your First Year at University?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the fifth question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 5.

When the responses to the fifth question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under three themes. These were respectively (1) Difficulties in public speaking, (2) Difficulties due to friends being in different cities, (3) Difficulties in communicating with the opposite sex.

Table 5.

Participants' responses to the question "What do you share about your social life in your first year at university?"

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Difficulties due to friends being in different cities	8	42.10	P.7. "I made very good friends in high school and this is the sixth year of my friendships, now I forgot how to make friends here."
Difficulties in communicating with the opposite sex	2	10.52	P.4. "Not liking, but I experienced a lot of stress especially when communicating with the opposite sex."
Difficulty speaking in public	9	47.36	P.11. I would have liked to be a group leader and be more confident in my new circle of friends.
Total	19	100.00	

Results Related to the Question "Where Do You Reside? What Are Your Thoughts about Your Place of Residence?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the sixth question asked to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

Participants' responses to the question "Where do you reside? What are your thoughts about your place of residence?"

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
KYK dormitory	7	53.84	P.4. "I am staying at the LDA dormitory. It is good because it is a new dormitory, but I still have difficulties."
Failure to settle in KYK dormitory temporary place of residence	2	15.38	P.7. "I am waiting for the KYK queue, so I am staying with our relative. Especially transportation is very difficult because of this. It is very far from the campus."
Private Dormitory	3	23.07	P.11. "In a private dormitory on campus. There is no transportation problem because it is on campus. I am satisfied."
Homestay	1	7.69	P.13. "My family is here."
Total	13	100.00	

When the responses to the sixth question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under four themes. The first three themes with the highest percentages are (1) "LDA dormitory", (2) "private dormitory", (3) "temporary place of residence". The theme with the lowest percentage is (4) "Homestay" as the most important factor in the development of the country's economy.

Results Related to the Question about Use of University Social Resources by First-Year Students

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the seventh question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Participants' responses to the question "Did you participate in activities related to various communities (sports, etc.) at the university? If yes, what kind of communities and activities did you participate in and how did you become aware of these activities?"

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Orientation week	10	58.82	P.2. "I saw it during the orientation week, but I was afraid to go to the stands and ask questions."
To be aware of friends in the upper class	2	11.76	P.8. I have a friend who has been here before. He guided me a lot."
Promotion stands	5	29.41	P.10. "Promotion stands were set up on campus. It was very good."
Total	17	100.00	

When the responses to the seventh question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under three themes. These were respectively (1) Orientation week (2) Promotion stands (3) Being aware of upperclassmen.

Results Related to the Question "What Kind of Expectations Did You Have from the University in the First Year?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the eighth question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

Participants' responses to the question "What kind of expectations did you have from the university in the first year?"

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
To have knowledge about the academic characteristics of the university	13	22.41	P.11. "I expected more academic information at orientation. My first semester and exams could have been better if I had been more conscious"
Teaching staff being more supportive	11	18.96	P.6. Most of the professors are professors and associate professors, but I would still like to be able to communicate more easily and to be motivated by them."
On-campus social activities	10	17.24	P.7. "I would like a comfortable and social environment where I can feel comfortable."
Improved transportation	9	15.51	P.13. "Definitely comfortable transportation"
Need for scholarship opportunities	4	6.89	P.2. "I have economic difficulties, so I wish there were more scholarship opportunities."
The need to benefit from the knowledge of experienced peers	3	5.17	P.1. "I think upperclassmen can share their knowledge. I would like to support when I am an upperclassman. Because it is difficult."
Psychological help	8	13.79	P.10. "I wanted to get psychological help for issues such as exam stress, making friends, shyness, but I was told that there was no time"
Total	58	100.00	

When the responses to the eighth question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under seven themes. The top three themes with the highest percentages are (1) Having information about the academic characteristics of the university, (2) Having more supportive lecturers, (3) Having social activities on campus, and the theme with the lowest percentage is (7) The need to benefit from the knowledge of experienced peers.

Results Related to the Question "Who or What Did You First Turn to for Support in the First Year?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the ninth question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.

Participants' responses to the question "Who or whom did you first turn to for support in the first year?"

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Family	6	22.22	P.6. "I talked to my mother at every opportunity."
Previous friends	9	33.33	P.3. "I am in constant communication with my friends from high school. This made me feel very comfortable."
Academic advisor	7	25.92	P.7. "I think it is because of my department, I study PDR and my academic advisor is supportive. Especially in course selection and academic issues. But my roommate is in a different department, so it is not like that for her. "
Psychological Counselling Service	5	18.51	P.11. "I applied to the psychological counseling unit. My roommate in the dormitory is a senior. He told me."
Total	27	100.00	

When the responses to the ninth question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under four themes. The first three themes with the highest percentages were (1) Previous friends, (2) Academic advisor, (3) Family (4) Psychological Counseling unit.

Results Related to the Question "What Kind of Opportunities Would You Like the University to Offer for First Year Students?"

The frequencies and percentages of the themes obtained for the tenth question posed to the participants within the scope of the interviews and sample participant expressions related to the themes are presented in Table 10.

Table 10.

Participants' responses to the question "What kind of opportunities would you like the university to offer for first year students?"

Themes	f	%	Participant Statements
Psychological support	10	27.77	P.4. "I applied to the psychological counseling unit, but the line did not come for a very long time. But I think it is a year when there is a great need in every subject. I think not only me but also everyone around me needs it."
Information about academic functioning	13	36.11	P.10. "Issues such as adjustment to university life, study methods, exams, grade systems"
Social events such as concerts etc.	11	30.55	P.11. "I would expect more social activities on campus."
Have a separate unit for first year students	2	5.55	P.7. "I would expect there to be a place we can apply to when we have difficulties."
Total	36	100.00	

When the responses to the tenth question were analyzed, it was seen that the responses were grouped under four themes. The first three themes with the highest percentages were (1) Information about academic functioning, Psychological support, (2) Social activities such as concerts, etc., (3) Having a separate unit for first year students to apply to.

Discussion and Conclusion

In examining the research findings, the question "What are your first experiences at university when you came to university?" was asked to determine the first-year experiences of first-year students. The themes related to this question are difficulties in choosing courses, difficulties in getting to the university, difficulties due to not knowing the university and friends, not knowing the campus facilities, distance from family and longing for family, economic difficulties and housing problems. The literature supports these findings. Miller and Lesik (2014) state that students who are new to university start university with characteristics such as study habits, ways of establishing and maintaining relationships, socio-economic characteristics as well as personality traits, and these characteristics should be taken into account in the process adjustment of students. In the study conducted by Mercan and Armağan Yıldız (2011), it was found that the most problematic areas of new students at the beginning of university were academic issues, career planning, time management, anger management, coping with stress and shyness. Karin, Lisa, and Amritha (2010) stated that the period when family longing is experienced intensely is the first semester, starting from the first week of university, and that feelings such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness that arise with family longing negatively affect students' social and academic adjustment, especially in the first semester.

In parallel with the findings of this study, English, Davis, Wei, and Gross (2017) stated that approximately 70.00% of new university students feel family longing and loneliness during their first year and first semester. According to the findings of this study, it can be seen that first-year university students' initial experiences at university are predominantly in the form of difficulties in all the adjustment domains defined by Baker and Siryk (1986), namely academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal/emotional adjustment, and purposefulness/institutional attachment. The results in relation to the question "What are the first emotions you felt when you came to university?", which was one of the questions used to determine how these difficulties arose in the adjustment areas, were found to be loneliness, excitement, anxiety, longing and uncertainty. These results are similar to those found in

the literature. Looking at the studies on first-year students' adjustment to university, the adjustment area with the most difficulties for students in the transition process is personal emotional adjustment (Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, & Pelletier, 2001; Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, & Purswell, 2008). The most intense problem areas during the first year of transition to university are homesickness due to separation from family (English, Davis, Wei, & Gross, 2017; Fisher, Murray, & Frazer, 1985), loneliness (Mounts, Valentiner, Anderson, & Boswell, 2006), and lack of social support (Mounts, 2004). Homesickness, loneliness, and the inability to benefit from social support systems can lead to personal and emotional disharmony, which can have negative consequences such as depression and anxiety that affect students' well-being (Villate, Marcotte, & Potvin, 2017). The findings of this study are similar to the literature. The findings are important in that they show that the emotions felt by first-year university students are similar across different cultures.

Analysis of the participants' responses to the question 'What did you think was positive and/or negative about being a university student in your first year at university?' identified the themes of the complexity of the university academic system, not being able to cope with living in a different city, thoughts about not being able to make friends, thoughts about not being able to make a living economically, and the importance of the style and attitude of lecturers. Although these findings support those relating to the first year experience, it can be seen that factors within the realm of academic adjustment predominate. Reason, Terenzini and Domingo (2006) state that perceived support from the academic environment of the university is highly related to the academic performance of first year students. However, Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin and Purswell (2008) emphasise that the academic performance of first-year university students cannot be assessed independently of their social lives. Tinto (1988) states that establishing effective relationships with other students, lecturers and other university staff, understanding and adapting to the intellectual structure of the university are both inputs and outputs of this stage. In other words, it is emphasised that meaningful relationships with school staff and friends and the acquisition of intellectual roles are the factors that ensure a positive outcome of the integration stage (Tinto, 1988). Similarly, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) state that the interaction of first-year students with teachers inside or outside the classroom facilitates this process. The theme of the importance of lecturer style and demeanour identified in this study supports the importance of the support that first year students perceive from the university and the importance of communication with lecturers.

Responses to the question "What are your thoughts about the variety of courses, intensity of courses, lecturers, etc. that are part of your academic life in your first year at university?" include confusion about the grading system, the need for information about how to communicate with lecturers, difficulties in choosing courses, and the need for support from lecturers. The importance of first year students having the knowledge and skills to cope with their new academic life was highlighted in similar research findings. Communication with academic and administrative staff as a component of academic adjustment (Astin, 1993; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006), acquisition of new academic study skills (Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, & Purswell, 2008), satisfaction with the educational programme (Rooij, Jansen, & Grift, 2018) are the needs identified in this study. Another point highlighted in the studies is the acquisition of new academic knowledge and skills in the first semester of the first year when the student arrives at university (Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo, 2006; Wintre et al., 2011). In this study, uncertainty about the grading system and the need for academic communication skills are the needs that emerged in the context of academic adjustment.

In relation to the question "What would you say about your social life during your first year at university?", the themes of difficulties due to friends being in different cities, difficulties communicating with the opposite sex and difficulties speaking in public were found. The literature supports the findings of the study. Arnett (2004) states that the social adjustment of emerging adults in the transition to university is determined by peer relationships, which play an important role in the process as a characteristic of developmental periods. Swenson, Nordstrom and Hiester (2008) emphasise that in the first year of university students receive intensive support from their old friends during the first three weeks of the first semester, that they may be reluctant to form new relationships in this process, and that their adjustment to university may be negatively affected by this situation. Similarly, Robbins, Allen, Casillas, Peterson and Le (2006) stated that a good balance should be struck between social withdrawal or excessive sociality during this period, and that this rigidity or flexibility can lead to negative outcomes, particularly in the academic context. In parallel with the literature, the findings of this study show that students may be reluctant to form new friendships due to the intense support they receive from old friends. Social adjustment, which includes students' peer relationships, romantic relationships, and communication with academic and administrative staff, is central to the transition to university (Aseltine & Gore, 1993). In other words, the first thing that students focus on during the transition to university is their effective social relationships (Cleary, Walter, & Jackson, 2011). The concept of social relationships

brings with it the concept of social support (Shim & Ryan, 2012). Wintre, Gates, Pancer, Pratt, Polivy, Lefcovitchd, and Adams (2009) emphasise that first-year university students navigate this process more successfully with a supportive circle of friends and campus life.

Participants' responses to the question "Where do you live? What do you think about your place of residence?" revealed the themes of LDA residence, temporary residence, private residence and host family. Where students live is an important factor in first-year students' adjustment. English, Davis, Wei, and Gross (2017) stated that most students encounter new housing opportunities and start living in dormitories, student houses, or with relatives, and accordingly, about 70.00% of first-year students feel homesick and lonely in the first semester of their first year. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) state that belonging to a community in campus life facilitates the adjustment process. At this point, it can be seen that living in halls of residence can be supportive in terms of social adjustment. On the other hand, if the first year at university is evaluated in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the satisfaction of the need for shelter, which is at the first level of the pyramid of needs, and its quality are considered important in terms of feelings such as loneliness and homesickness, which arise in the context of personal emotional adjustment during this period.

Participants were asked, "Have you participated in activities related to different communities (sports, etc.) at the university? If yes, what kind of communities and activities did you participate in and how did you become aware of these activities?", the themes of orientation week, awareness of upperclassmen, and promotional booths were identified. The importance of orientation activities for first-year students is also evident from the results of this study. In this context, the importance of universities introducing the resources of the university within a structured program emerges within the domain of goal attainment / institutional attachment adjustment. Baker and Siryk (1984) define goal attainment / institutional attachment as finding the educational and social opportunities provided by the university meaningful, developing a sense of belonging to the university, feeling that the student is a part of the university, and establishing a common bond between the university and the student's own goals. The coherence here refers to the interactive interaction that affects the student's adjustment. (Wapner and Demick, 1998). In other words, to understand students' adjustment to college, the interaction between students' individual development and college environmental factors should also be considered. On the other hand, this is supported by the findings of studies that orientation programs increase students' adjustment levels (Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999; Porter & Swing, 2006; Tieu, 2008). Although studies of college adjustment are generally considered to be orientation-based adjustment studies, studies of first-year and first-semester adjustment, which are considered to be transitional processes, have increased in importance and intensity in recent years. Porter and Swing (2006) emphasized that first-year and first-semester transition programs are highly correlated with student persistence and success. Goodman and Pascarella (2006) state that although first-year adjustment programs are different and varied in content and form, these programs are very key and important programs that provide long-term results by being implemented at the stage of students entering college. In support of this view, Lien and Goldenberg (2012) emphasize that orientation programs called "wilderness" increase the level of adjustment of new students to the university environment.

The findings related to the question "What kind of expectations did you have from the university in the first year?" were determined as the themes of having information about the academic characteristics of the university, having more supportive academic staff, having social activities on campus, improving transportation, need for scholarship opportunities, need to benefit from the knowledge of experienced peers and psychological help. The expectations of first-year students from the university are significant in terms of showing the needs of students. In this regard, the study found that while academic adjustment needs predominate, there are also needs in the dimensions of personal/emotional adjustment, social adjustment, and purposefulness/institutional attachment. These findings are similar to those found in the literature. Parker et al. (2004) state that first-year college students are trying to regulate their social relationships while trying to meet the expectations of a different academic environment, so their academic adjustment should be addressed along with their social adjustment and personal/emotional adjustment. Carter, Locks, and Winkle-Wagner (2013) emphasize that many first-year university students come to university with optimism, high academic achievement, and expectations of a positive university life, but many of them have difficulties in the second year and may even consider dropping out of university. Alexon and Kemnitz (2004) emphasize that first-year university students need to learn the strategies of the new academic environment rather than the old strategies they have to adapt to the new academic environment.

Similarly, Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, and Pelletier (2001) stated that first-year university students' responsibilities have changed in many academic areas, such as orientation to academic resources, homework preparation, and communication with academic staff, and learning to cope with these responsibilities is one of the most important factors in this process. Clark (2005) stated that students may think that the academic demands they face when they come to university are very difficult demands and withdraw in the process, but it is critical for them to realize in the first year and especially in the first semester that these academic demands are demands that can be learned and managed. In other words, preparing students for the academic demands of university in the first year was emphasized as an important factor in preventing time loss in this process.

Cukras (2006) states that the study strategies of first-year university students differ between the two semesters and that students learn the academic expectations of the university through communication with academic staff and develop strategies accordingly. In addition, he states that the services offered to learn the new academic environment in the first semester of the first year prevent the loss of time related to academic adjustment. A striking theme in these findings is the need to benefit from the knowledge of experienced peers. This theme supports the findings of Aladağ's (2009) experimental study based on peer counseling. In this study, she examined the adjustment levels of first-year students through peer mentors. As a result of the study, it was found that peer counselors were found to be useful in terms of informing about academic issues, providing information about university life, sharing problems experienced, relaxing, gaining new perspectives, showing alternatives to possible solutions, raising awareness of personal problems and supporting their adjustment. Another issue is psychological help. This finding supports the results of the longitudinal study conducted by Doğan (2018) in Turkey. In the study, the reasons for students' application to the psychological counseling center were investigated. Among the reasons for applying to the psychological counseling center in the period between 1997 and 2013, it was found that the problems of adjustment to university were one of the main reasons. However, in the period between 2006 and 2016, it was found that there was a decrease in the rate of adjustment problems due to the transition process in this period due to the introduction of programs to support students' university adjustment.

In examining the findings related to the question "Who or what did you first turn to for support in the first year?", the themes of family, former friends, academic advisor, and mental health counseling were identified. These themes also support the other themes of the other research. Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, and Purswell (2008) emphasize that first-year students' academic performance cannot be evaluated independently of their social lives. Wong, Day, Maxwell, and Meara (1995) found that emotional awareness of others and social perception have a mediating effect on the academic performance of university students. The fact that family and academic advisors are among the first sources of support that students turn to is similar to the study conducted by Terenzini, Rendon, Lee Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, and Jalomo (1994). As a result of the qualitative research conducted by Terenzini et al. (1994), it was found that the support that the majority of students received from their families as well as faculty instructors was very important to them in the adjustment process. Another striking theme among these issues is that the university counseling center is one of the first resources for students.

According to the American College Health Association [ACHA] 2015 data, it was found that there was an increase in emotional problems such as depression and anxiety among first-year university students between 2010 and 2015. Therefore, the importance of providing services that support the personal-emotional adjustment of first-year students through psychological counseling and university counseling centers/units is emphasized. Similarly, Sidle and McReynolds (2009) state that it is the ethical responsibility of universities to meet the psychological needs of first-year students within the faculty. Wintre et al. (2009) state that the interaction between universities and students through counseling units is a binding factor in the social adjustment of students during the transition to university. Kuh (2003) emphasizes that these units are part of a "supportive campus life".

The results related to the question "What kind of opportunities would you like the university to provide for first-year students?" revealed the themes of psychological help, information about academic functioning, social activities such as concerts, etc., and having a separate unit for first-year students to apply to. These themes are similar to the previous findings of the study and the literature. Finding the educational and social opportunities provided by the university meaningful, developing a sense of belonging to the university, and establishing a common bond between the university and the student's own goals (Baker & Siryk, 1984). On the other hand, when evaluated in the context of the need for safety, love and belonging in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, the importance of the support perceived by the student from the university emerges in these results. Deci and Ryan (2000), in their autonomy theory, prioritize psychological needs related to learning, interpersonal relationships, and the individual's role in the social and physical environment. In this context, first-year students' need for psychological help, academic functioning,

and support for social activities from the university can also be evaluated in the context of basic needs. Similar results were found in the qualitative research conducted by Keup (2007). As a result of the research, it was found that first-year students demanded studies that would support their personal and interpersonal development in terms of their expectations from the university. Similarly, in a qualitative study conducted by Mercan and Armağan Yıldız (2011) in Turkey, it was determined that first-year students expected support from the university regarding academic and psychological issues. Similarly, in a qualitative study conducted by Ciccone-Estrela (2012), it was determined that family support and perceived university support were the most effective factors in first-year students' social adjustment.

As a result, studies on the adjustment of first-year college students emphasize that adjustment is a process that includes student expectations, motivation, and student involvement (Tinto, 1993; Weidman, 1989). In other words, it is considered as a process that evaluates internal factors such as student expectations, student involvement, experiences, academic performance, personality traits, in-class and out-of-class activities, communication with instructors and other staff, peer groups and peer group relationships, and external factors such as communication outside the university and family relationships (Clark, 2005). The results of this study show similar findings for first year students in Turkey. It is before the second year that students are most frustrated and dropout occurs at the level of intention or action (Sidle & McReynolds, 2009). Accordingly, situations such as not being able to integrate with the university, not wanting to adapt to the university, and withdrawing from academic activities may occur and this situation may turn into a vicious circle (Adelman, 2006). In order to prevent this vicious cycle, the following suggestions are offered based on the findings of this study;

- Due to the exam-based university placement system in Turkey, students may move away from the social and academic environment of the university they come from before they arrive at the university. For this reason, it is believed that universities can benefit from first-year adjustment programs in order to support students' potential as well as to create university prestige and culture.
- It is believed that first-year programs that support the personal-emotional adjustment of first-year students will have a protective function for mental health in the long term if offered through university psychological counseling and counseling centers/units.
- Nowadays, it is stated that there are different factors influencing the adjustment to university compared to the past years. One of these factors is the use of social media in social and emotional adjustment processes, especially in the first year and first semester students' participation in university life (Lanthier & Windham, 2004). According to PIALP 2002 (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2002), it was reported that 93.00% of college students use online communication tools (facebook, whatsapp, etc.) to improve their social relationships outside of academic activities. Furthermore, it has been stated that students prefer to use online communication tools to solve their relationship problems (Delevi, Bugay, & Avcı, 2018). Therefore, it is believed that the social media factor should not be ignored in the context of social adjustment.
- The statistics of the studies conducted through the orientation units of the universities can be effectively kept, and the content of the programs can be updated based on these statistics according to the changing needs in the process.

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