A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES ESTABLISHED AFTER 2000S

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ŞAHABETTİN AKŞAB

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES, EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND PLANNING

OCTOBER 2024

Approval of the thesis:

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES ESTABLISHED AFTER 2000S

submitted by **ŞAHABETTİN AKŞAB** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Sciences, Educational Administration and Planning, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences _____

Prof. Dr. Zeynep SÜMER
Head of Department
Department of Educational Sciences _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap EMİL
Supervisor
Department of Educational Sciences _____

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Soner YILDIRIM (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap EMİL (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Educational Sciences _____

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Middle East Technical University
Department of Educational Sciences _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alper ÇALIKOĞLU
Nazarbayev University
Graduate School of Education _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pınar AYYILDIZ
Ankara Medipol University
Department of Management Information Systems _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Şahabettin AKŞAB

Signature:

ABSTRACT

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES ESTABLISHED AFTER 2000S

AKŞAB, Şahabettin
Ph.D., The Department of Educational Sciences, Educational Administration and Planning
Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap EMİL

October 2024, 543 pages

Student engagement is a multidimensional concept that is not limited to the activities in the courses, but also encompasses the cognitive, behavioral and emotional processes of students and includes both individual effort and the support provided by the university to students. The aim of this study is to examine the academic, psychological and social dimensions of student engagement in the Turkish higher education system and to reveal what students experience in university life and what they expect from their universities. This study is a qualitative study. A multiple case study design was used to examine four Turkish state universities established after the 2000s in terms of student engagement. The semi-structured interview form and written and visual documents on the student websites of the universities were used as two main data sources in the data collection process. Within the scope of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 136 undergraduate students. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis method. First, a within-case analysis was conducted for each case university and then similarities and differences between the universities were identified through cross-case analysis. The findings of the study showed that student engagement is a multidimensional construct. Six different dimensions of

student engagement emerged: (1) environment of university, (2) academic engagement, (3) psychological engagement, (4) social engagement, (5) financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, and (6) political engagement. According to the findings, universities need to strengthen both academic and social facilities, provide financial and psychological support to students, and develop participatory management processes to increase student engagement. In this way, students can be more engaged in university life and get more out of their education process.

Keywords: Student Engagement, Higher Education, Undergraduate Students, Türkiye, Student Development

ÖZ

2000'Lİ YILLARDAN SONRA KURULAN TÜRK ÜNİVERSİTELERİNDE ÖĞRENCİ KATILIMI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇOKLU DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

AKŞAB, Şahabettin
Doktora, Eğitim Bilimleri, Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Serap EMİL

Ekim 2024, 543 sayfa

Öğrenci katılımı, yalnızca derslerdeki etkinliklerle sınırlı olmayıp, öğrencilerin bilişsel, davranışsal ve duygusal süreçlerini de kapsayan ve hem bireysel çabayı hem de üniversitenin öğrencilere sunduğu desteği içeren çok boyutlu bir kavramdır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk yükseköğretim sisteminde öğrenci katılımının akademik, psikolojik ve sosyal boyutlarını inceleyerek, öğrencilerin üniversite yaşamında neler deneyimlediklerini ve kendi üniversitelerinden neler beklediklerini ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışma nitel bir çalışmadır. 2000'li yıllardan sonra kurulan dört Türk devlet üniversitesini öğrenci katılımı açısından incelemek için bir çoklu durum çalışması deseni kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama sürecinde yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ve üniversitelerin öğrenci web sitelerindeki yazılı ve görsel belgeler iki temel veri kaynağı kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında 136 lisans öğrencisi ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veriler, tematik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Öncelikle dört üniversite için vaka içi analiz yapılmış ve daha sonrasında çapraz vaka analiziyle üniversiteler arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, öğrenci katılımının çok boyutlu bir yapı olduğunu göstermiştir. Öğrenci katılımının altı farklı boyutu ortaya çıkmıştır: (1)

üniversitenin ortamı, (2) akademik katılım, (3) psikolojik katılım, (4) sosyal katılım, (5) finansal konular, barınma ve beslenme ve (6) politik katılım. Bulgulara göre, üniversitelerin öğrenci katılımını artırmak için hem akademik hem de sosyal olanakları güçlendirmesi, öğrencilere finansal ve psikolojik destek sağlaması ve katılımcı yönetim süreçlerini geliştirmesi gerekmektedir. Bu sayede, öğrencilerin üniversite hayatına daha fazla katılım göstermeleri ve eğitim süreçlerinden daha fazla verim almaları sağlanabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenci Katılımı, Yükseköğretim, Lisans Öğrencileri, Türkiye, Öğrenci Gelişimi

To the university youth in Türkiye

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing the acknowledgment section is the time that makes me realize the fact that I am literally at the end of a long and arduous journey encompassing several ups and downs, success, and challenges. I have been blessed to have many extraordinary forces supporting me. So, at the end of this journey, as a survivor, there are so many people that I would like to express my gratitude.

At the heart of it all is my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap Emil, who I encountered at a crucial turning point in my academic career. She not only kindled my interest in the field of educational administration but also opened my eyes to the world of higher education studies, guiding me through both its complexities and its opportunities. She has been far more than an academic advisor to me. She has been a mentor, a source of unwavering support, and a constant source of inspiration. Her belief in my abilities, even when I doubted myself, gave me the strength to persevere through challenging times. She has shown me what it means to be both a dedicated researcher and a passionate instructor. Her guidance has profoundly shaped both my professional journey and my personal development. The impact of her wisdom and encouragement will forever remain with me, and I know that I would not have reached this point without her by my side. For this, I am deeply, deeply grateful.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the esteemed members of my dissertation committee, whose insights and expertise have greatly strengthened my research. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Dr. Yaşar Kondakçı and Prof. Dr. Soner Yıldırım whose valuable feedback and guidance helped shape the direction of my study. Their thoughtful contributions and encouragement throughout this process have been essential in refining my ideas. Additionally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alper Çalıkoğlu and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pınar Ayyıldız, who took the time to participate in my dissertation defense. Their questions and comments offered new perspectives that enhanced my understanding of the subject matter and contributed significantly to the final version of this study.

I am grateful to TÜBİTAK for their financial support during my Ph.D. study, which allowed me to focus on my research. I also want to thank my colleagues, both past and present, for sharing in this journey. Their support and companionship during moments of uncertainty, joy, and challenge made me feel far from alone.

I am deeply grateful to my family, who have supported me every step of the way on educational and individual journey. They never hesitated to do everything in their power to help me, and I cannot express how much it means to me that they never let me feel alone in this process. For all the sacrifices they made and for standing by me through every challenge, I am eternally thankful.

And finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Hatun Vera Akşab, who has brought so much beauty into my life since the moment we met. Thank you for loving and supporting me for who I am, for believing in me even when I doubted myself, and for understanding me in ways that sometimes surpass my own self-awareness. Your unwavering patience, especially during my most difficult moments, has been a constant source of strength for me. Through every challenge and triumph, you stood by my side, always encouraging me to keep going. I am forever grateful for your love, patience, and for being my greatest source of strength and joy throughout this journey. I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM iii
ABSTRACT iv
ÖZ vi
DEDICATION viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS xi
LIST OF TABLES xiv
LIST OF FIGURES xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xvi
INTRODUCTION 1
1.1. Background of the Study 1
1.2. Scope of the Study 11
1.3. Purpose of the Study and Research Question 21
1.4. Significance of the Study 26
1.5. Definitions of Terms 30
REVIEW OF LITERATURE 32
2.1. Student Development in Higher Education 32
2.2. Student-centered Ecosystems in Higher Education 36
2.3. Student Engagement 39
2.3.1. Theories of Student Engagement 43
2.3.2. Measurement Approaches to Student Engagement 49
2.3.3. Core Dimensions of Student Engagement 52
2.3.4. Student Engagement in Online Learning 56
2.3.5. Student Engagement Practices in Higher Education 58
2.3.6. Literature Review on Student Engagement Studies in Higher Education of Türkiye 63
2.3.7. Summary of the Literature Review on Student Engagement Studies in Higher Education 73
METHODOLOGY 75
3.1. Research Approach 75
3.2. Overall Research Design 76

3.3. Research Question 81
3.4. Research Context 81
3.4.1. Case 1: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU) 85
3.4.2. Case 2: Adıyaman University (ADYU) 92
3.4.3. Case 3: Uşak University (UU) 96
3.4.4. Case 4: Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) 102
3.5. Participants of the Study 107
3.6. Data Collection Instruments 113
3.6.1. Semi-structural Interview Form 113
3.6.2. Written and Visual Documents 115
3.7. Data Collection Procedure 115
3.8. Data Analysis of the Study 117
3.9. Trustworthiness of the Study 120
3.10. The Role of the Researcher 123
3.11. Limitations of the Study 124
RESULTS 126
4.1. Within-Case Findings 126
4.1.1. Case 1: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU) 127
4.1.1.1. Descriptive Findings of RTEU 127
4.1.1.2. Interpretative Findings of RTEU 171
4.1.2. Case 2: Adıyaman University (ADYU) 180
4.1.2.1. Descriptive Findings of ADYU 181
4.1.2.2. Interpretative Findings of ADYU 231
4.1.3. Case 3: Uşak University (UU) 238
4.1.3.1. Descriptive Findings of UU 238
4.1.3.2. Interpretative Findings of UU 301
4.1.4. Case 4: Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) 308
4.1.4.1. Descriptive Findings of AYBU 308
4.1.4.2. Interpretative Findings of AYBU 356
4.2. Cross-Case Findings 363
4.2.1. Descriptive Cross-Case Findings 363
4.2.1.1. Environment of University 366
4.2.1.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement 375
4.2.1.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement 390
4.2.1.4. University in terms of Social Engagement 398
4.2.1.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition 406

4.2.1.6. University in terms of Political Engagement 412
4.2.2. Interpretative Cross-Case Findings 414
4.2.2.1. Environment of University 414
4.2.2.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement 416
4.2.2.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement 418
4.2.2.4. University in terms of Social Engagement 419
4.2.2.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition 420
4.2.2.6. University in terms of Political Engagement 421
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS 423
5.1. Discussion of the Results 423
5.1.1. Discussions on Environment of University 423
5.1.2. Discussions on Academic Engagement 430
5.1.3. Discussions on Psychological Engagement 440
5.1.4. Discussions on Social Engagement 444
5.1.5. Discussions on Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition 449
5.1.6. Discussion on Political Engagement 454
5.2. Implications for Theory, Research and Practice 457
5.3. Recommendations for Further Research 460
REFERENCES 462
A. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORM (IN TURKISH) 518
B. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORM (IN ENGLISH) 521
C. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE 524
D. RESEARCH APPROVALS OF UNIVERSITIES 525
E. INFORMED CONSENT FORM 529
F. CURRICULUM VITAE 530
G. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET 533
H. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU 543

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 The number of university students in Türkiye by years 7
Table 2 The number of students dropping out university in Türkiye (2015-2022).. 10
Table 3 The number of universities according to student satisfaction levels by years 70
Table 4 The factors researched in the literature on the concept of student engagement in higher education 73
Table 5 Descriptive information of the selected four universities established after 2000s in this case study 84
Table 6 The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of RTEU 90
Table 7 The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of ADYU 95
Table 8 The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of UU 100
Table 9 The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of AYBU 105
Table 10 The descriptive information on participants of the study 108
Table 11 The findings of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU) 127
Table 12 The findings of Adıyaman University (ADYU) 181
Table 13 The findings of Uşak University (UU) 239
Table 14 The findings of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) 309
Table 15 Summary of cross-case findings 364

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Visual Representation of Research Design..... 79

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADYU	Adıyaman University
ASSE	Australian Survey of Student Engagement
AYBU	Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University
CoHE	Council of Higher Education
EAQA	European Association for Quality Assurance
EU	European Union
GPA	Grade Points Average
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
KPSS	Civil Servant Selection Examination
KYK	Credit and Dormitories Institution
NSS	National Student Survey
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
NUS	National Union of Students
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ÖSYM	Measurement, Selection and Placement Center
RTEU	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SES	Student Experience Survey
TÜMA	Türkiye University Satisfaction Survey
UK	United Kingdom
UKES	United Kingdom Engagement Survey
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
UU	Uşak University
YÖKAK	Higher Education Quality Council

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of the study is expressed. This chapter tries to introduce the background of the study including higher education trends including demographical changes, diversity, transformation, relevance, cost-sharing and internalization in higher education in terms of student experience. Then, the purpose and scope of the study are provided in this chapter respectively. At the end of this chapter, the significance of the study and the definitions of the related terms are given.

1.1. Background of the Study

In light of the fundamental political and economic changes occurring in the countries, as well as the worldwide shift toward a knowledge-driven paradigm, the question of how universities manage conflicting tasks is important (Brennan et al., 2004). At this point, the questions of what is university education and what is the main role of universities come to mind, particularly in terms of how these institutions engage students in their learning processes and prepare them for future challenges. Higher education researchers have been debating the main purpose of higher education for an extended period. It's critical to reconsider the goal of university education. Higher education researchers have long debated the main purpose of higher education, but one aspect that cannot be overlooked is how these debates affect student engagement. It's critical to reconsider the goal of university education with an understanding that student engagement plays a vital role in shaping educational outcomes.

According to literature in the field of higher education, a university education serves more purposes than only providing technical knowledge. Engaging students in the learning process is essential to achieving these broader educational goals, as it enables students to connect theory with practice and apply knowledge in real-world contexts.

Universities undoubtedly act as knowledge storage facilities, but their main purpose is to promote critical thinking (Clegg, 2008; Davies, 2011), intellectual growth (Graham & Donaldson, 1999; Pike & Kuh, 2005a, 2005b, Terenzini et al., 1996), and a desire for lifelong long learning (Schutze & Slowey, 2000; Watson & Taylor, 1998; Yang et al., 2005). Universities seek to develop well-rounded people who can navigate the complexity of the modern world through a combination of demanding academic pursuits, exposure to varied viewpoints, and engagement with complicated ideas (Anderson, 1993; Kromydas, 2017). Moreover, they seek to instill skills such as creativity, adaptability, and ethical reasoning. In that way, universities can prepare their students not only for successful careers but also for active and educated citizenship (Hensley, 2020; Ortaylı, 2001). Essentially, the main goal of a university education is to provide students with the knowledge and morals needed to make significant contributions to society, promote good change, and lead satisfying lives. Active student engagement in academic life enables these broader educational goals to be realized, encouraging students to think critically, grow intellectually, and commit to ongoing personal development. Through fostering engagement, universities can prepare their students not only for successful careers but also for active and educated citizenship.

Essentially, the main goal of a university education is to provide students with the knowledge and moral foundation needed to make significant contributions to society, promote positive change, and lead fulfilling lives. To achieve this, universities must prioritize student engagement, ensuring that students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in their educational journey. Through engagement, students develop critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and a sense of social responsibility.

When looked at these thoughts, some researchers underlined that the goal of higher education should be to develop equipped minds, advance global development, foster both individual and economic growth, and encourage active citizenship in common (Arum & Roksa, 2011, Birnbaum, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Saichaie & Morphew, 2009). However, there has always been conflict between the academic and vocational roles. This tension directly impacts how student engagement is prioritized. To what degree do the needs of the job market play a significant influence in

determining university goals? To what extent are organizational structures of universities affected by the expectations of political, economic, cultural, and social dimensions of countries? (Moscardini et al., 2022). While universities must prepare students for the workforce, their primary goal should be fostering deep student engagement in the learning process, which extends beyond vocational training. This engagement allows students to adapt to changing workforce demands while also developing broader skills that contribute to personal growth and societal wellbeing.

The main goals of higher education are threefold, and all are closely tied to student engagement. First, it entitles students access the knowledge, chance to develop skills, and certification required for job and life involvement. It also exposes them to wider viewpoints on society and other people. In the end, it turns them into individuals who can think independently and express their personal views. Even if most students still prioritize the higher education's qualification objective, integrating these three goals will affect how education quality is seen, evaluated, and actively sought (Trinidad et al. 2023). When student engagement is effectively integrated into these processes, the quality of education improves significantly. Active student participation in all aspects of university life transforms how education quality is perceived and evaluated by students, making it a key component in achieving the broader goals of higher education. Moreover, universities that emphasize student engagement often see higher levels of student satisfaction, retention, and academic success, demonstrating the direct link between engagement and educational outcomes. Student experience and engagement are sometimes overlooked. However, as student needs and enrollment levels fluctuate, focusing on student engagement is critical to adapting university systems and ensuring positive educational outcomes. Universities that fail to prioritize student engagement risk disengaged students, lower academic achievement, and diminished institutional relevance.

In the last three decades, university systems have seen significant transformations. Understanding these changes is essential for shaping student engagement strategies moving forward. As universities adapt to these transformations—whether it be through technological advancements, globalization, or shifting workforce demands—fostering student engagement becomes a critical strategy for maintaining educational relevance and quality. Arguably, contemporary advances are at least as significant as those in the

nineteenth century, as the research-oriented university emerged, and completely changed the essence of the university globally (Karakhanyan & Stensaker, 2020). Altbach et al. (2009) examined and categorized the changes in higher education. The privatization of universities, financial limitations, increased attention to quality and accountability, greater diversity in enrollments, an increasing desire for professional and personal development and continuous learning and changing habits for higher education institutions and national systems to accelerate themselves in international and global contexts are only a few of the most significant trends in recent decades. These changes will inevitably have an impact on students, who are the most important internal stakeholder group in higher education across the world. Each of these shifts directly affects how universities engage with their students, requiring innovative approaches to ensure that students remain actively involved in their education. As universities adapt to these new realities, fostering student engagement will become even more critical to their growth.

Significant changes have taken place in the size, demographic structure, requirements, goals, and worldwide student population expectations (Altbach, 2007). In many countries like Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Ireland, Russia, the United States, these trends have put a lot of strain on both higher education institutions and whole systems of higher education. A variety of institutional and structural changes have been made in response to new student realities. These changes have affected and are still changing the size, structure, and the nature of university education (Scott et al., 2008). These higher education trends have had an impact on the student experience. As a result of these developments, university students across the world face new and distinct challenges and possibilities. Addressing these evolving realities through student engagement is essential for creating meaningful educational experiences. Engaged students are more likely to thrive in diverse and dynamic environments, which is increasingly important as higher education becomes more accessible to a wider range of students.

Some essential concerns stand out as critical to understanding the recent decade's interaction between students and higher education including changes in student demographics, diversity of students, transformation of tertiary education, increasing desire for relevance, increasing need for cost-sharing, distance education, and

internalization (Altbach et al., 2009). While many of these issues are discussed at length by many higher education studies researchers (Chan, 2016; Fidalgo et al., 2020; Kay et al., 2010; Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bovill, 2021; Trinidad et al., 2023), examining the student experience is sometimes overlooked. Howe and Strauss (2007) say that, when evaluated together, these challenges indicate that higher education experiences of students are shifting. As a result of new types of student needs and fluctuating enrollment levels, the environment for higher education systems and institutions are changing. In terms of organizational transformation in universities, the importance of the process of questioning dominant trends is emphasized by looking at the criticism of the assumptions and the analysis of the consequences of the actions taken (May, 2006). On this axis, higher education trends in Türkiye that may have positive or negative effects on the experience of university students appeared.

When looked at the average of OECD countries, the gross enrolment rate in higher education rose from 66% to 78% between 2010 and 2020. The gross enrolment rate of higher education in Türkiye outpaced that of average of the OECD countries. In 2010, the gross enrolment rate was 56% and by 2020 it had increased to 117% (World Bank, 2020). The fact that this rate has exceeded 100% may sometimes be surprising, but it is possible. Due to early or late enrolment, grade repetition and the presence of non-traditional students who are over or underage students according to their educational levels, this ratio can reach 100%. Higher education institutions in Türkiye generally fall into one of two categories, namely, public universities and foundation universities except for foundation vocation schools. Whereas Türkiye has 129 public universities, the number of foundation universities is 75 according to current data of CoHE (2024). The number of higher education institutions has increased rapidly, especially with the policy of "one university in each city" launched in 2006. This accelerated increase has also brought about an increase in university quotas. Türkiye is going through a major change in terms of massification in higher education. A notable trend in higher education has been the increase in the number of private tertiary institutions and their growing percentage of enrollment globally (Levine, 2018). There are foundation universities instead of private universities as an alternative to public universities in Türkiye. According to CoHE (2024) data, there are still a total of 208 higher education institutions in Türkiye.

One of the most important problem areas regarding higher education in Türkiye has been access of graduates of secondary education to higher education. The role of higher education in increasing social and individual welfare and the increasing rate of schooling at secondary education level have increased the demand for higher education in Türkiye (Özoğlu, 2011). Despite the small decrease in the number of applicants for the national university entrance exam.

To enter a higher education institution in some years since, it has generally continued with an increasing momentum until today. While the number of applicants for the university entrance exam was around 450.000 in 1980, this number nearly doubled in 1990 and approached 900 thousand. While this number approached 1,5 million in the year 2000, which entered the millennium, 1,5 million walls were demolished in 2010. In 2020, when the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were widely seen all over the world and many systemic changes were experienced, the university exam was postponed from the announced date and the content of the exam was narrowed. In 2020, the number of applications made to the university exam approached 2,5 million, and in 2022, 3.243.425 people applied to the competition in the university exam in Türkiye (ÖSYM, 2023). In 2024, 3.120.878 candidates applied for the higher education institutions examination (ÖSYM, 2024). While the total quota in higher education programs providing formal education (excluding open education) was 867.224 in 2022, it increased to 923.411 in 2023. While the total number of the placed students in formal education programs was 850.631 in 2022, excluding open education, this number increased to 898.024 in 2023. According to these data, the total number of the placed students in any formal education program increased by 47.393 students compared to the previous year (ÖSYM, 2023).

The demand for higher education in Türkiye has increased from 1980 to 2024. Access to higher education rose alongside the supply increase. Comparing the number of university entrance exam applicants to those enrolled in formal and open education programs, the placement rate showed an annual increase until 2016, peaking at 50% in 2008. This growth was influenced by the policy of establishing a university in every city, initiated in 2006. Despite minor declines, the placement rate generally rose until 2016 but then sharply dropped by 7% in 2017, from 43% to 36%. Another significant

decline occurred in 2021, with the rate falling from 38% in 2020 to 31% due to the pandemic.

Moreover, Türkiye's higher education system, which had only 19 state universities in 1981 (Gür & Özoğlu, 2015), consists of 129 state universities, 75 foundation universities and 4 foundation vocational schools by 2024. This increase in the number of universities by years did not increase linearly. The change in the number of students in Türkiye before and after the 2000s is striking (Table 1).

Table 1. *The number of university students in Türkiye by years*

Year	# of State Universities	# of Foundation Universities	# of Foundation Vocational Schools	# of State University Students	# of Foundation University Students	# Foundation Vocational School Students	Total # of University Students
1992	49	2	-	782.676	7.136	-	789.812
1996	51	8	-	1.209.851	9.852	-	1.219.703
2001	51	23	-	1.536.493	50.545	-	1.587.038
2006	68	25	3	2.188.013	107.993	3.415	2.299.421
2024	129	75	4	6.204.078	735.433	10.631	6.950.142

Source: CoHE (2024)

Some researchers (Günay & Günay, 2011; Gür & Özoğlu, 2015) who saw an important development in this period in terms of higher education policies underlined that these universities were opened to provinces that did not have universities before and facilitated access to higher education. On the other hand, the rapid quantitative growth of higher education institutions has been discussed and criticized by many researchers (Akbulut-Yıldırmış & Seggie, 2018; Emil, 2020; Erdoğmuş & Esen, 2016; Karataş-Acer & Güçlü, 2017; Kavak, 2011). Those who oppose the rapid establishment of new universities stated that they are in favor of increasing access to higher education, but this access should be increased after the necessary structure and infrastructure are established (Tekeli, 2010).

Newly-established universities are institutions that do not have a long history and are still in the process of shaping a developed academic background and a solid institutional structure. In addition, in such frameworks, quality has been of utmost importance. In certain circumstances, the capacity to oversee and guarantee quality has lagged behind the development of newly-established higher education institutions. According to Altbach and colleagues (2009), access and quality are related. Quality is an identifying trait that serves as a guide for students and institutions of higher learning. Access and high-quality ought to go hand in hand. In other words, that higher education is in the highest caliber but not broadly accessible is meaningless whereas that higher education is widely accessible but of the lowest caliber is worthless.

In general, although policies aimed at solving the problem of access to higher education in Türkiye have made significant progress in increasing access, there are many question marks about quality (Emil & Kondakçı, 2017). Access policies that have tried to meet the higher education supply in the face of demand pressure in higher education, that is, to increase the quantity, should also review the quality of education from now on. Student profiles that have diversified after the massification movements bring along the expectations and demands of students from higher education. Similarly, Emil (2020) underlined that Türkiye's higher education has undergone a rapid digital transformation starting from the 1990s to the present. As a result, the university has been discussed in terms of the quality as a social institution. Quantitative growth, which is a necessary step in terms of access to higher education, is seen as a prerequisite for qualitative growth.

Under these changes, well-established universities benefit from a rich historical legacy that strengthens their student practices. However, newly-established universities are still in the process of developing and refining their strategies in this area. Therefore, the opportunities and challenges within the framework of student engagement needs to be examined for newly-established universities. Analyzing these activities can shed light on how these institutions are addressing student engagement. It is essential for fostering a vibrant academic community. By investigating the specific practices and strategies employed, we can determine which aspects are successfully enhancing student engagement and where there are gaps or deficiencies. This evaluation helps in understanding the (in)effectiveness of current approaches, reveals best practices, and

highlights areas needing further development. Such a detailed study is necessary to meet their immediate educational objectives. In addition, it helps to create an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes long-term student growth.

Both well-established and newly-formed universities should continue to refine their strategies around student engagement. It is essential to recognize how the shifting demographics of the student population further complicate and enrich this task. With the increasing diversity in age, background, and life experiences of students, institutions must adapt their engagement practices. These institutions need to ensure they are meeting the needs of all learners. Understanding the relationship between changing student demographics and student engagement is key to developing inclusive practices for a broader range of students.

Changing Demographics of Students

Increasing enrollment rates and improving access in Turkish higher education are significantly changing the profile of students accessing higher education. The increasing number of students and the diversifying student body are reshaping the typical university experience. In addition, social, cultural, economic and digital transformations around the world are profoundly influencing and shaping students' university experiences. Ignoring these transformations is contrary to the nature of higher education and may hinder the creation of solutions that are in line with the real needs of university students. Higher education, which used to appeal to a limited segment of the population, is now reaching a wider audience and this is reshaping the typical university life. The new student profile consists of students from different socio-economic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds and individual expectations. It requires universities to make radical changes in their educational and service policies.

While this sharp increase is the case, the higher education system in Türkiye has attracted attention in recent years with increasing dropout rates. The Indicator Values Report published by the Higher Education Quality Board (YÖKAK, 2023a) revealed the increase in the number of students leaving universities between 2015-2022. This report showed that the number of students dropping out of university education reached 2.260.057 in these eight years (Table 2). This shows that the higher education

system in Türkiye is facing a serious problem and urgent measures need to be taken to reduce dropout rates.

Table 2. *The number of students dropping out university in Türkiye (2015-2022)*

Year	**# of Students Dropping out University**
2015	98.436
2016	118.657
2017	150.124
2018	305.695
2019	495.132
2020	363.313
2021	339.136
2022	389.564

Source: YÖKAK (2023a)

Another important finding of the YÖKAK report (2023a) is that university dropouts are concentrated mostly in big cities. The number of students dropping out of universities in big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir is higher than in other cities. Especially at Istanbul University, the number of students who dropped out of university in the last two years has approached 23.000. This suggests that the high cost of living in big cities, the attractiveness of job opportunities, and the social and economic dynamics of cities may affect students' decisions to drop out of university education.

Beyond the dropout rates, the graduation rates are also critical. According to Eurostat (2019) data, the number of university students per thousand population in Türkiye is 95, while the European Union (EU) average is 38, making Türkiye the country with the highest number of university students relative to its population. However, the university graduation rate in Türkiye is around 30 percent, while the EU average is 40 percent. This shows that a significant proportion of students who start university in Türkiye drop out before graduating. The reasons for high university dropout rates may include deficiencies in the quality of education, economic and social factors, students' uncertainty about finding a job and inadequate career planning. To solve these problems, it is necessary to improve the quality of education at universities, improve the financial support provided to students and expand career guidance services. Shaping education policies in this direction will increase the quality of education in Türkiye and improve graduation rates.

These types of recent data indicate a significant increase in the number of students from dropping out of higher education in Türkiye, particularly in the past few years. This phenomenon warrants a comprehensive investigation into the multifaceted factors contributing to this tendency. It is imperative to explore and understand the underlying reasons behind student dropout, focusing on the disparity between student expectations and their actual experiences within the university setting. By examining the academic, social, and economic factors influencing students' decisions to leave university, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by students. Additionally, identifying the gaps between what students anticipate from their higher education experience and what they encounter is crucial. This study is thus essential to inform policy decisions and institutional practices aimed at improving student retention and enhancing the overall educational experience in Turkish universities.

In this context, the importance of student engagement plays a critical role in understanding the impact of these transformations on higher education and developing policies that can respond to students' needs. Universities in Türkiye need to reconsider their educational policies and practices, taking into account student experiences and expectations. Addressing the university from the students' perspective is crucial for both increasing academic success and ensuring students' overall life satisfaction and growth. These types of analyses will help the Turkish higher education system develop policies that are more responsive to student needs and identify strategies to help students realize their full potential. Moreover, such studies will provide important insights for Türkiye to increase its competitiveness in the global higher education arena and improve the quality of higher education.

1.2. Scope of the Study

Considering higher education challenges and trends in higher education mentioned above, we need to talk about the student experience within the scope of higher education’s purpose and mission. In the dynamic landscape of higher education, current trends are reshaping the traditional student experience. As higher education continues to evolve, these trends are required to rethink how students can tailor their academic journeys to match their individual aspirations or create a more enriching and

personalized higher education experience. Therefore, students being the major component of higher education needs to be discussed.

While the United States and Europe have a long history of studying the impact of university education, the newly developed higher education sector in countries such as Türkiye the topic needs consideration for research purposes. The studies (Astin, 1970; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella, 1980) have generally focused on quantity and quality of higher education, critical outcomes of higher education, the issue of cultivating of talented students and scholars, and the relative proportions of academic achievement and failure. Based on these foundations, consideration of empirically established goals and expectations regarding the outcome of academic education seems to be a prerequisite for critical evaluations of outputs in university education (Sandberger & Lind, 1979).

With this massification of higher education, the number of students enrolled in university has grown, but the rate of non-graduates has also increased and quality problems have begun to emerge (Wissema, 2009). The factors such as the exponential increase in the knowledge produced every day around the world, the emergence of new working fields and the importance of training multi-skilled individuals have led to the questioning of the adequacy of university education in equipping with the desired knowledge, skills and values. In this context, wide-ranging quality and accreditation studies have started to be carried out at the national and global level to determine the competencies of students in the fields of basic education (Öz, 2019).

Student experience has illustrious history in university education. There is a deep and complex link between the quality of higher education and student experience. Academic rigor alone does not guarantee a high-quality education. A higher education institution's total experience with its students also plays a significant role. A positive student experience is made up of many different components, such as good instruction and effective teaching practices, encouraging learning environments, resource availability, chances for extracurricular activities, and a feeling of belonging. As mentioned above, student experience does not remain independent of higher education trends and is affected from most of the changes in higher education systems. Pedagogical methods, student evaluations of teaching, and educational practices have

all been the subject of systematic student experience measurement in the past (Grebennikov & Shah, 2013). Satisfaction of students with their time at the university is increasingly being included into higher education institution operations. When looked at how we are entering a new period of educational change, the transformation of education sets the stage for understanding student engagement. This is a transitional period from an era defined by individual effort and tested student achievement to one centered on student engagement, student wellbeing, and student identity (Shirley & Hargreaves, 2021).

For this purpose, several worldwide indexes and barometers such as National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Student Experience Survey (SES), and National Student Survey (NSS) have risen to prominence (Maroco et al., 2016). It is important to have systematic information about university experience for higher education stakeholders since it positively affects the student transformation in the university. In addition, this systematic information enables the providers to direct resources into the areas that need improvement and to evaluate success from an institutional perspective (Bowden et al., 2019).

However, higher education institutions are becoming more competitive because of predominance of quantitative indicators in corporate satisfaction measurements and world rankings, rather than concentrating on how the support services in the universities might improve overall university experience (Grebennikov & Shah, 2013). For example, NSSE has been strongly criticized because of lack of psychometric properties by Campbell and Cabrera (2011). They underline that this survey tries to measure students' study habits, what they gain from university experiences, and other aspects of student life without directly measuring the psychological structure of student engagement. In addition, Brown and Mazzarol (2009) stated that with the effect of progressing with the normative structure in satisfaction measurements, they acted with the hypothesis that all students come to their higher education journey with the same level of satisfaction. Considering the students who may not have come to the university with equal and close satisfaction even when coming to the university, analyzing the satisfaction status of these students without considering their possible different experiences, experiences, conditions, implicit expectations, emotional reactions and goals may lead to erroneous inferences.

That means the separation of the notion of student experience in higher education institutions from social, cultural, academic and political issues may prevent the overall experience. In other words, student experience cannot be viewed of as separate from what has come before it and from all that surrounds it (Sabri, 2011).

For higher education institutions to be successful overall, there must be a connection between the quality of education and student experience. Beyond academic success, a positive student experience includes aspects such as campus life, extracurricular activities, and support services. Students' desire to succeed academically and sense of general wellbeing are increased when they feel inspired, encouraged, and involved. More than just imparting knowledge, quality of education also entails fostering an atmosphere that encourages critical thinking, teamwork, and personal development. Higher retention rates, more student achievement, and a reputation for providing top-notch instruction are typically observed in institutions that place a strong priority on the student experience. A major component of the comprehensive idea of educational excellence is acknowledging and meeting the various needs and expectations of students.

The complexity of higher education experience as a transformational force alters the one who acts or undergoes. This transformation includes the establishment of emotional and intellectual attitudes (Barnacle & Dall'Alba, 2017). When the higher education literature is examined, it has reverted to this paradigm, which incorporates the ontological viewpoints of academic life and the contribution of these institutions to who and what students have become. This point of view has been discussed under the nomological frameworks of time on task (Tyler, 1930 as cited in Kuh, 2009b), quality of effort (Pace, 1960-1970 as cited in Kuh, 2009b), involvement of students (Astin, 1984), outcomes of students (Pascarella, 1985), student integration in terms of social and academic contexts (Tinto, 1993), effective teaching and learning strategies for undergraduates (Chickering & Gamson, 1991), interactions among university students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), student engagement (Kuh, 2009b). Higher retention, lifetime learning, relevance to educational program, enhancing institutional prestige, and increased civic involvement behaviors are just a few of the traditional success characteristics that have been related to student engagement (Trowler, 2010; Zepke et al., 2014). However, taking the transformative force of higher education

institutions into consideration, additional subjective and all-encompassing outcomes for students, such as social and personal development, the fostering of belonging and inclusion, transformational learning, and the improvement of student wellbeing have been linked to student engagement. Universities should consider the expectations of and participation with students as well as their function in forming the three dimensions of student engagement, namely emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement, by considering the whole scope of engagement in transformational higher education experiences.

It is crucial to note that research and theories surrounding contemporary student engagement are not unique to the modern era. In his notion of a democratic education, which first presented in 1906, all stakeholders of educational context, most notably the students, have the right to say how they want to be educated. (Dewey, 1916). These conservations regarding educational growth frequently came from sociological educational theorists who believed that democratizing, emancipating, and expanding access to education were essential components of reformed educational systems. One way to potentially overcome the worldwide difficulties that limit social mobility, as described by philosophers like Pierre Bourdieu, is to adopt a learner-centered approach in addition to oppression of people who are not in power in the structure of institution (Zanten, 2005). Students may contribute to the process of making education more accessible, its methods more inclusive, and the learning experience more engaged by participating in the conversation about education reform. In elementary and secondary education, studies on student and pupil voice have received a lot of attention. These studies describe the advantages for learning and engagement (Czerniawski & Kidd, 2011). With its guiding philosophy of increasing student-faculty communication, engagement studies conducted in elementary and secondary levels stimulate more higher education research into what identify as excellent undergraduate education (Chickering & Gamson, 1991).

The United States even highlighted the importance of the students having a voice in their educational practices in 2011 even if they are students under the age of 18 (Lansdown, 2011). In order to understand and reduce student belonging problems, alienation, and dropout rates, the concepts of student engagement and disengagement in higher education were created in the 1980s. (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Scholars such

as Astin (1984), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) first used the term at a time when student enrolment to the second year of higher education was low in the United States. It can also be said that the financing changes in this period were related to the prevention of university dropout in higher education. They claimed that students who participate in educational activities are more likely to advance through higher education (Tinto, 2006). Soon, outside the US, parallels in higher education could be found in other countries as well. Governments started to shift their attention to universities. They have focused on learning and student development. For getting scholarship for postsecondary education and doing research in the subject of teaching and learning, this also resulted in the expansion of educational development networks abroad. Additional parallels may be drawn by the UK's 2011 HE White Paper: Students at the Heart of the System (BIS), Australia's 2017 Higher Education Reform Package, and Europe's efforts to involve students as partners in quality assurance (European Association for Quality Assurance, 2005).

New efforts in higher education have begun to take shape, culminating in the development of learning and teaching teams and the hiring of educational developers. The priorities of the students' union were also starting to show themselves in new settings where colleagues and students would start to think about how higher education might be improved. This sped up the transition from teacher centered didactic teaching and learning practices to student-produced knowledge, travels, and experiences (Neary & Winn, 2009).

Critical issues regarding higher education more generally have been raised because of more study in the area of student engagement, such as examining students' transition. For example, Thomas (2012) looked at how students felt a feeling of belonging, while Shaw et al. (2017) studied into how alienated first-generation students and students from non-traditional backgrounds felt in higher education. The proportion of young people attending university has increased exponentially in some countries, such as Australia, the USA, Canada, and the UK. Therefore, higher education institutions have expanded their capacity. For instance, in the United Kingdom, participation increased from 12% in the 1950s to almost 50% in 2017, which shows the massification of higher education in the UK (Shaw et al., 2017).

Positive initiatives have also been done to broaden the variety of the student body entering higher education in tandem with this rise. The reasons for enrolling in higher education have changed, and there is now a greater focus on learning outcomes, which are frequently cited as an important factor in student decision-making. The government, students, and parents regularly link beliefs about the employability benefit from higher education (Moore & Morton, 2017). Because universities are under pressure to improve their procedures and address accessibility, student engagement studies and practices have frequently been adopted as a means of assessing success. According to Mann (2001), engagement is the antithesis of alienation and enables students to fully participate in the higher education community. For Higher education institutions and educational improvement, it has been and still is a top responsibility to make sure that students not only stay in higher education but can also get the support services they need, engage with the educational program and all opportunities of higher education to achieve their goals (Hunter et al., 2010).

Since the 1990s, there has been a remarkable growth in the number of studies on student engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning. The study of Kuh and Hu (2001) defining the concept of student engagement as including the time students put into learning-related activities and the effort institutions make to use successful educational techniques was an important advance for higher education internationally. In the continuation of these studies, the National Student Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), one of the most notable surveys of student engagement in modern higher education, was developed and launched. It served as a tool for institutional measures of student engagement as well as a way to identify areas that needed targeted improvement (NSSE, 2019). The Australian Survey of Student Engagement (ASSE), the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and The UK Engagement Survey (UKES) are just a few of the national surveys that have been inspired by this survey, which introduced a comparative measure for collaborative engagement of students in their education, both at the class and institutional levels. These surveys are bringing in new, pertinent stakeholders to the discussion of student engagement, such as professionals in student services such as counsellors, experts in career centers. The administrators in the universities unavoidably have followed these types of surveys as league tables for universities and colleges throughout the world have taken the results of engagement into consideration. Undoubtedly, it is valuable

to have a quantitative assessment of how students are responding to their university experience. Despite the fact that these are unquestionably distinct forms of student engagement that have sparked extensive research in adjacent fields (Senior et al., 2017).

The described contextual elements, which were mostly concentrated in western higher education systems, sparked the focus on student engagement, which included what we will regard to as push and pull aspects. A more diverse range of students, massification, and tuition fees for higher education which are may be categorized under marketization of higher education are included in push aspects (Lea, 2015). The government, tax payers, the media, and increased student union activity and interest in higher education governance are additional push aspects that place more focus on learning, students' value for investment, and results of the higher education experience like employable graduates. The greater push aspect for accountability for higher education institutions include national surveys, league tables, indicators of university performance, as well as new experimental metrics regarding student outcomes and excellence of teaching (Dunne, 2017).

The growing importance placed on ensuring that higher education is accessible to students, that they may prosper while attending university, and that they feel like they belong there are among the pull forces described. Higher education institutions collaborate with students to improve their own institutional operations and make sure that courses encourage learning in an accessible way for a variety of audiences as a strategy to guarantee that students succeed and have a transformational experience. It's crucial to remember that actual student engagement is driven by the students themselves. According to Shaw and Atvars (2018), the ways of engagement are student agency, activism, lobbying, and advocacy on institutional or class levels via students' unions. Student unions' expansion and professionalization, which allowed them to access previously off-limits university areas like quality assurance, representation of students, and officers on university committees, have increased pressure on Higher education institutions to advance themselves and produced fresh insights into improvement. Many of the techniques have been developed around a table where many stakeholders gathered in response to the push and pull considerations mentioned above about student engagement strategies. More articles started to be

published asking the meaning of student engagement, understandings and misunderstandings regarding student engagement, and who really owns engagement as research projects in the USA and the NSSE gained pace.

Student engagement has become increasingly popular as a discourse, and the UK Higher Education Academy funded a literature review of it. In 2010, following the trend of student engagement in higher education up to this point and focusing on learning in the higher education environment, Trowler (2010) conducted literature review of this construct, outlining three major dimensions of student engagement which are cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, and emotional engagement. It has become more important to include students in educational advancements, improvement, or change. According to Buckley (2014) the distinction between curriculum-based engagement and decision-making student engagement can be expressed that student engagement may either be in the curriculum or in policy. Also, Bryson (2014) asserted that student engagement may be divided into two categories named students engaging and engaging students. Morris (2018) underlines that student engagement is defined by several quality assurance mechanisms as participation in the quality and development processes such as having a student voice in review panels and representation of students in decision making process. When asked what the students believed student engagement to be, they gave stronger emotive meanings of the term, linking it to their feelings of belongingness, acceptance of being and transformation in the study conducted by Solomonides and Reid (2009) rather than viewing it as measurable construct. Its ambiguity became the first significant complexity in its research, discourse, and practice during this period of increased interest in student engagement.

Numerous academics and researchers have different definitions of student engagement in the higher education studies and in regional higher education institutions, and these definitions can be interpreted in a variety of ways (Bryson, 2014; Dunne 2016). According to Finn and Zimmer (2012), enhancing students' physical or emotional engagement with the educational program is a practical way to increase overall student engagement. More sophisticated ways to increase student engagement include student ownership, participatory approaches, and participation in university-wide development or policy initiatives. The definition of student engagement differs from

perspectives of the researchers. When discussing students' experiences in higher education, this offers flexibility as a major strength, but the absence of clear distinctions can lead to confusion among instructors, administrators and students at the higher education institutions. Unfortunately, the construct of student engagement runs the risk of becoming a fuzz word. The lack of conceptual clarity before starting initiatives or research might be risky on institutional, regional and national levels (Vuori, 2013). We will be greatly limited in our capacity to enhance, boost, support, and promote student engagement through well-designed interventions, if we do not meet at one point, albeit in general, about the meaning of the construct of engagement (Buckley, 2014). Zepke (2013) adds that it is up to educators to interpret and mold these concepts and topics for various, unique circumstances, contexts, and the most significantly, students. Thus, to ensure that the stakeholders involved in the process is aware of the sort of student engagement being addressed before starting any research, project, or conversation related to it, it is essential to provide clear definitions of the construct of at the outset.

Higher education institutions are accelerating toward a full marketization of the industry in the twenty-first century due to increased pressure from numerous governments around the world. The universities aim to produce measurable student outcomes, improve learning, and demonstrate an investment worthy as added value (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020). Higher education institutions have two alternatives for how to approach their connection with their students given the impending marketization, competition, and responsibility.

The first approaches see the students as customers. Due to this, the only ways for students to participate in the advancement of their education are through grievances, end-of-course feedback forms, campus rallies, and social media outbursts. The other is student engagement approach. To improve the quality of learning and support personal growth, higher education institutions actively include students in decision-making process. Students collaborate with their departments and institutions and share responsibility for mutual assistance as a member of their institution. To improve students' experiences at their institutions, it is a need to highlight best practices in higher education institutions from across the world. It will include theory-influenced and transformational educational-development programs, schemes, and research

activities. Students and faculty have entered new areas to improve their experiences in higher education because of universities and their units opening up their structures and processes to include students in decision-making. In this way, higher education students will be more empowered as partners and peers to take part in educational development. These student engagement programs are currently being implemented by higher education institutions all over the world. Traditional hierarchical power structures between faculty, administrative personnel of the institution and students are gradually dissolving because of student engagement, partnership discussions, projects, and approaches because all parties are coming together to critically evaluate higher education delivery and make changes for the advantage of all stakeholders. Higher education institutions have transitioned from extremely one-sided discussions about how we have traditionally maintained education to collaborative discussions about how we might develop the learning and teaching practices. Engagement studies conducted with higher education students who are real partners of universities introduce these modern working methods, highlighting the main areas of activity and study and outlining the difficulties that student encounter in their practices.

1.3. Purpose of the Study and Research Question

Students are expected to reach certain results at the end of the social and academic processes they spend in higher education institutions. These outcomes can range from high academic performance to failure, graduation to dropout, continuing higher education at the same institution or going to another, and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with higher education. I would question this position of outcome-based perspective on higher education institutions and maybe take more of a wholistic one. That means, it is more critical to focus on the changes and transformation process we expect higher education institutions should fulfill.

Since 2000s, Türkiye has undergone significant transformations in higher education. The rapid increase in the number of universities, the continuous rise in university quotas, and the growing number of students attending universities are key indicators of massification in higher education. With this increase, access to higher education has improved, leading to quantitative growth. However, it has also sparked debates on quality issues. Additionally, massification has brought about changes in student

demographics and profiles. This reshapes their expectations from universities and their needs in response to changing sociological, economic, and technological dynamics. Moreover, the university dropout rates in Türkiye have become noteworthy in recent years. In 2021 and 2022, 728.700 students dropped out university. It reveals the dramatic scale of university dropout rates. This highlights a serious problem within the higher education system in Türkiye and underscores the need for urgent measures to reduce dropout rates. The fact that so many students are leaving universities raises questions about their experiences in higher education and their level of engagement. While well-established universities with historical legacies can develop alternative solutions to these challenges, the activities related to student engagement in universities established in Türkiye after the 2000s have garnered significant interest. This study examines the academic, social, and psychological experiences of students in universities established after 2000s in terms of student engagement.

Student engagement creates a dynamic and collaborative learning environment that is a catalyst for the transformation of higher education institutions. Student engagement models in higher education suggest that students can be successful or graduate by assuring their continuity in higher education by integrating them into the institution's academic and social operations. Student engagement in higher education emphasizes both the individual effort of the student and the support of the institution in this integration. The only responsibility of higher education institutions should not be to provide students with the knowledge and skills to acquire a profession. Learning and self-actualization are difficult to take place only through in-class work. To experience an effective university life, it is important that students have a psychological readiness and commitment to learning, teaching staff, friends, the campus and the university. In other words, the psychological basis of learning, especially, begins at the entrance of the campus and even in the transportation to the campus before coming to the classroom. A culture of continuous improvement is fostered via engagement, whereby involved students' feedback directs institutional development to better address changing requirements. Furthermore, by stressing both academic knowledge and vital soft skills, the emphasis on engagement is in line with preparing students for the complexity of the world. To put it simply, student engagement is essential to creating a life-changing educational experience that equips learners for success in a world that is changing quickly.

Pre-university expectations of the students are an important determinant of the level of student engagement with their higher education experiences. The concept of student engagement, according to Bryson et al. (2009), includes beliefs, expectations, and experiences associated to being a student as well as the production of being a student. Student engagement represents the perceived difference between what is expected from the university (expectations) and what is given by the university (performance). When the related literature is examined, it is seen that there is a relationship between student expectations and student engagement. Because they have never attended a higher education institution before, most students enter university with a variety of expectations. These expectations have an influence on their eventual university experience. For example, students who arrive to university with low expectations of connecting with instructors and peers are more likely to exhibit low levels of behavioral engagement (Kuh et al., 2006), when faced with difficult academic activities, the students who have high expectations for themselves will more often show increased cognitive engagement through perseverance (Crisp et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important to identify student expectations and real university experiences for establishing or maintaining high degrees of engagement in behavior, social context, cognitive aspects, and emotions.

It is possible to talk about a minimum level of engagement in every student who comes to a higher education institution for different purposes. However, what is important at this point is to increase the level of student engagement and to maintain a high level of engagement throughout university life. Undoubtedly, it is possible to mention many factors that affect the students during university experience. In this context, the necessary regulations can be made in order to increase student engagement in academic and social activities for university students and studies related to campus life. In order to increase student engagement, students' interests and needs should be considered and student voice should be taken into consideration. When examined the related literature, it can be said that the factors of academic staff-students cooperation and interaction, university administration-students cooperation and interaction, group work, offering student options, teaching techniques that attract students' attention, technology integration, interactive digital platforms, inquiry-based learning, student-centered teaching, active and collaborative learning, providing interdisciplinary and real-life working opportunities, campus activities such as sports, arts and student clubs

are important in the process of developing student engagement (Angus Busby, 2011; Bouta et al., 2012, Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Neal, 2010).

Moreover, engagement at a distance is another point in student engagement in higher education institutions. In remote teaching, since students are physically separated from their peers and instructors and their campuses, it becomes more difficult to engage students (Bolliger & Halupa, 2018). There is an increasing number of studies focusing on factors affecting student engagement and strategies for engaging students in online learning and teaching (Ma et al., 2015). However, the studies showing that student engagement is better in the distance learning and teaching process are also included in the relevant literature. On measures of student engagement and student outcomes, Chen et al. (2008) discovered that distance learners typically do better than their campus-based counterparts. They indicated increased practical competence, personal and social growth, and overall satisfaction with their university experience. In this scope, it is a matter of curiosity about the experiences of university students in Türkiye, who experienced educational activities from a distance during the pandemic process, in terms of student engagement. In this study, it is aimed to draw a detailed framework by considering the academic, psychological and social dimensions of student engagement before and after the pandemic. Examining engagement of university students by comparing in the distance and face-to-face learning and teaching processes also guide the higher education policies of the future.

As a result, student engagement has become a critical construct in higher education in terms of student growth and learning. For the management of their efforts and resources of the universities in this area, it is important to explore the experiences of students in the scope of student engagement for higher education institutions (Sinatra et al., 2015). Higher education institutions have a great deal of challenges when it comes to student engagement, including declining student motivation, passive learning, and a mismatch between traditional teaching approaches and the demands of today's students. Students' sense of enthusiasm and belonging is lost when they participate in less extracurricular activities, participate in less active learning settings, and use technology in their learning environments in an inadequate manner. Because of this, there is a growing concern about the underutilization of available resources and the neglect of vital abilities like teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving.

Higher education institutions that want to offer a comprehensive and relevant educational experience that equips students for the demands of the modern academic and professional landscape must address the issue of low student engagement.

The transformation of higher education with the mentioned trends require to examine student engagement in and outside of the campus to hear the voices of university students especially in comparatively young higher education history in Türkiye. Well-established universities or universities with a certain historical background can be considered to have reached a certain stage in terms of student engagement. In particular, relatively new universities in Türkiye, which were established with the motto of "one university in each city" in the scope the expansion of higher education, in 2000s. There is a clear deficiency of thorough research on the subject of student engagement in higher education system of Türkiye. The issues concerning comprehending and resolving the particular difficulties encountered by students in this area are raised by the paucity of specialized research on student engagement in Türkiye. The understudied topics include cultural dynamics, learning and teaching approaches, campus life, psychological and social states, the effect of technology, etc. on engagement. To improve student engagement, higher education institutions in Türkiye must close this research gap and create customized tactics that match their methods and strategies to the changing demands of their student body.

It is necessary to examine what students in these universities have experienced and what they actually expect from their own universities. In this study, it is aimed to reveal the academic, psychological and social experiences of higher education students during their university life. Since student engagement in the Turkish higher education system directly affects educational quality and overall academic achievement, research on student engagement in the system is extremely important. Establishing an atmosphere that supports active learning, critical thinking, personal growth and self-actualization requires an understanding of and commitment to improving student engagement. In this study, through examining student engagement in higher education institutions, the researcher may pinpoint problem areas and positives sides and use focused tactics to improve student experiences. Additionally, emphasizing student engagement helps to create an inclusive and encouraging campus life that supports the

overall student growth. Taking it into account, this study tries to answer the following research question:

"*In what ways, do university students engage in university life in Turkish universities established after 2000s?"*

1.4. Significance of the Study

Increasing student engagement requires effort from both the institution and the students of this institution (Trowler, 2010). The focal points of student engagement are expressed in the form of individualized student learning, organizational structure, and identity. Firstly, individual student learning includes academic challenge, making an effort and showing interest in a variety of educationally focused activities which can be associated with motivational issues, favorable student outcomes such as improvements in performances of students, persistence (Astin, 1984) and satisfaction (Kuh et al., 2005), psychological development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), moral and ethical development (Evans, 1987), general abilities and critical thinking (Terenzini et al., 1996), building up social capital (Harper, 2008), practical proficiency and transferrable skills (Kuh, 1995). In addition, it includes the participation of students in academic and instructional design and assessment which can be categorized under student centered approach. On the other hand, when examining what student engagement brings in terms of student outcomes and institutional, some points are encountered in the relevant literature: institutional reputation, student wellbeing, transformative learning, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Institutional reputation. An organization's reputation encompasses its general values, affiliations, and expectations (Helgesen & Nesset, 2007). In higher education, student engagement and institutional reputation are interconnected, with reputation influenced by educational quality and opportunities. A strong reputation enhances perceptions of reliability, transparency, and quality, while boosting profitability (Robinson et al., 2018). Active student participation in academic and extracurricular activities bolsters a university's reputation, leading to academic success and positive perceptions among prospective students, employers, and the public (Sung & Yang, 2008; Alan et al., 2018). Engaged students also act as informal spokespersons, further enhancing the institution's reputation (Krause & Coates, 2008).

Student wellbeing. University experience enhances students' wellbeing and institutional reputation (Christenson et al., 2012). A supportive environment fosters potential, efficiency, and trust. Student engagement directly impacts wellbeing, with active participation in activities fostering community, purpose, and commitment (Anderson et al., 2013; Field, 2009). Engaged students build strong support networks, reducing loneliness and improving emotional wellbeing. Prioritizing student engagement strategies creates a supportive atmosphere, promoting overall student wellbeing in higher education.

Transformative learning. Transformative learning describes how university students' social and intellectual experiences reshape their perspectives on themselves, their community, and the world. It involves deep reflection, self-awareness, and identity-building, leading to a broader, more integrated view of life (Taylor, 2007; Anderson et al., 2013). This process benefits both the institution and society by enhancing the overall educational environment.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to meet expectations through effort, intelligence, and planning (Bandura, 2001). Engaged university students are more likely to develop this self-belief by navigating challenging coursework and participating in extracurricular activities (Kuh, 2001). Supportive environments that provide learning opportunities, social connections, and role models enhance self-efficacy and confidence (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Consequently, student engagement fosters a strong sense of self-efficacy, helping students tackle challenges and improve performance both in university and beyond.

Self-esteem. Self-esteem, a stable evaluation of one’s own worth, is integral to university education. It encompasses some factors such as self-control, achievement, and social acceptance (Campbell, 1990). Students with intrinsic motivation exhibit higher self-esteem compared to those who lack engagement (Ashkzari Khademi et al., 2018). Genuine motivation arises from understanding the value of one's degree, which is fostered through active emotional, mental, and behavioral involvement (Kahu, 2013). Thus, student engagement is crucial for enhancing self-esteem and motivation in higher education.

Despite a strong rhetoric on the value and importance of student engagement in higher education studies, there is a limited practical and solution-based approach in the literature. When examined the studies, students have generally presented as customers of universities. However, it should not be forgotten that the students are co-authors of their universities. This study stems from the observation that student engagement has been deprioritized in Turkish universities established after the 2000s, which do not have a long historical legacy. Due to this gap, it is crucial to examine these universities from the perspective of students, focusing on student engagement to understand its significance in shaping student experiences. While student engagement has often been studied quantitatively, this research highlights the importance of adopting a qualitative approach. The study aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and threats faced by these universities regarding student engagement. It would provide a comprehensive understanding of how these institutions can better foster student involvement. There is a limited amount of research on the academic, psychological, and social experiences of students at universities established in Türkiye after 2000s. This lack of research underscores the need for a deeper examination of student experiences in these institutions. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the qualitative aspects of student engagement in these newer universities.

In this study, instead of ignoring the students, it aims to understand the nature, function and quality of student engagement in higher education institutions. For higher education institutions, the results of this study may help to understand and interpret the student voice since student voice can be a guide to create a learning community, to respond to students' expectations and needs, to stimulate them to participate in extra-curricular activities, to design opportunities for academically challenging experiences for higher education institutions. This means that for higher education institutions to stay relevant and viable, new strategies must be adopted to bring engagement from the periphery to the center of research, teaching, and service. To embrace the process and principles of civic democracy, engagement should be completely integrated into the institution's one of the central cores (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011).

Secondly, in terms of structure and process dimension, student representatives in university governance are important for student engagement (Trowler, 2010). How

and to what extent university students are represented in committees at the department, faculty and university level play an important role in this context? With this study, the situation of student representation in universities will be investigated. In addition, the elite universities have established the dean of student affairs, student supports or student services in the world. Student affairs practitioners or student affairs professionals are those who operate in this sector. At higher education institutions, specialists in the field of student support services strive to provide services and supports that encourage student learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Structurally, these units, which continue to work under the dean of student affairs generally, try to support the academic, social and psychological development of students. In recent years, it has been observed that some foundation universities such as Bilkent University, Hasan Kalyoncu University, Koç University and MEF University and some state universities Middle East Technical University, Abdullah Gül University, Boğaziçi University, Eskişehir Technical University, İstanbul Technical University, Sakarya University and Yıldız Technical University in Türkiye have established Dean of Students or Dean of Student Affairs following these approaches in the world. Especially when the national literature was examined, it was observed that there were not enough studies for the development of the structure of deans of student affairs. These types of units or deans established to gather activities that make university life easier for students under a single roof. In addition to presenting the structure of the dean of student affairs, it is thought that this study, which is designed specifically for governance and leadership, can serve as a guide for the new student deanships to be established. In this study, it is aimed to present a perspective on how student representation continues at department/faculty/university levels in higher education institutions and what kind of structure or framework should be created to support student engagement.

While the students should try to develop their knowledge and skills and manage their own learning process, the higher education institution must provide and organize an appropriate environment for the students to learn and take steps towards her/his self-actualization. It can be argued that communication between university administration-students, university staff-students is effective in improving student engagement. In this study, it is planned to present student affairs leadership model of good practices that may provide basis for development of student affairs and to prepare a guide that

administrators, lecturers and policy makers in universities can use in terms of student engagement. The possible findings of this planned study may be beneficial for the development of academic, social and psychological engagement of students in higher education institutions. This research on student engagement in the Turkish higher education system tries to offer insightful information that helps institutions, instructors, and policy-makers improve their strategies and give a road map for dynamic and productive learning environment for all students.

1.5. Definitions of Terms

Student-centered learning is a pedagogy or andragogy in which the instructor collaborates with students as a co-facilitator in an active and engaged learning process. Additionally, student-centered learning can be defined as a constructivist approach to active learning and to have independent problem-solving skills (Rogers, 1983).

Student engagement is all the time and individual effort a student expends in activities related to the expected outcomes of a university education and what the university does to encourage its students to participate in these activities (Kuh, 2009b).

Cognitive engagement is described as awareness and willingness to put in the effort necessary to grasp difficult concepts and master difficult abilities, including the use of advanced learning strategies and active self-regulation of learning (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Emotional engagement is a feeling of belonging and affiliation to educational institution. Alternately, emotional engagement refers to students' emotive responses to assignments, classes, professors, academics, and university life in general (Zimmer, 2012)

Behavioral engagement refers to students' outwardly visible actions, such as involvement and participation in academic-oriented and extracurricular activities, which are thought to be essential for attaining successful academic results and avoiding dropout (Fredricks et al., 2004).

First generation university student is a student whose both parents did not finish any university education program.

Traditional student describes a post-secondary student that enters straight out of high school, attends full-time, and do not have any significant life or employment commitments during university life and is under the age of 25.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of the literature is presented from student development and change to student engagement in this chapter. Since this study is mainly associated with student engagement in higher education, literature on this field is presented under student development and change in higher education, student centered eco-systems, student agency, the relationship between student agency and student engagement; definition of student engagement; theoretical background, approaches, conceptual framework and dimensions of student engagement; the place, practices and outcomes of student engagement in higher education.

2.1. Student Development in Higher Education

The way that university student experiences are organized stems from the distinctions made between student development and student change as a whole (Terenzini, 1987). The concepts of student development and student change in higher education are separate yet related. According to some higher education researchers (Evans et al., 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Strayhorn, 2016), student development is the complex process by which students change throughout the duration of their time in universities. It explores the pre-existing traits that students bring to university, the wide range of experiences that they have there, and the results that follow (Williford et al., 2002). It involves changes in values, personal development, and cognitive progress (Long, 2012). On the other hand, student change which is frequently linked to Tinto's (1993) model of student departure is more narrowly focused and concentrates on the variables that determine whether students continue their education or leave it (Milem & Berger, 1997). In other words, the term of change only describes gradual modifications to a student's cognitive-oriented skills, emotional traits, attitudes, beliefs, or actions. While student change is more focused on the immediate difficulties

of integration and adjustment, stressing social and intellectual factors that influence a student's decision to remain in universities (Braxton & McClendon, 2001), student development considers a wide range of experiences and student outcomes. To put it simply, student development offers a thorough and long-term perspective on the whole educational process.

The transformational aspect of higher education is inextricably linked to the relationship between student experience and student development. Throughout their university journey, students are exposed to a wide range of events that influence their intellectual, social, and personal development. Every aspect of the student experience, from stimulating class discussions and group projects to participation in extracurricular activities and contacts with a diverse peer community, adds to the overall development of students (Tam, 2002). Critical thinking skills, identity development, and the development of interpersonal and leadership skills are all facilitated by meaningful interaction with educational programs and the larger campus community (Knefelkamp et al., 1978; Rodgers, 1989). That means the complexity of the student experience processes as a melting pot in which learners undergo a process of transformation, developing into comprehensive people endowed not only with academic cognition but also with the abilities and characteristics required to succeed in a changing and linked world.

As accelerators for comprehensive growth, student development and student change play a crucial part in the higher education experience. Student development is that people gain important life skills, values, and a sense of identity in addition to their academic knowledge (Patton et al., 2016). The value of satisfaction and supportive educational environment is highlighted by student change, especially when it comes to perseverance and adaptability. This environment has a major role in contributing to students' overall happiness and success in their pursuit of higher education (Jones & Stewart, 2016). Together, these ideas improve the educational experience for higher education students and help them become well-rounded, academically strong, and ready for the challenges of the real world.

In scholarly debate on higher education, the convergence of conceptions of student change and student development creates a vital nexus. This comprehensive

understanding of student development creates the foundation for investigating theoretical models (Abes et al., 2019; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A review is conducted of theories about the nature and dynamics of university student growth as well as the ways in which higher education institutions impact student transformation (Evans et al., 2009; Patton et al., 2016). The theories of university student change mostly address traditional undergraduate students' progress instead of involving non-traditional students. The theoretical frameworks and models of student growth are grouped into two major categories, named developmental theories and university impact models by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005).

Theoretical frameworks for understanding how students grow academically, socially, and personally over their university years are provided by developmental theories of student change in higher education. The developmental theories discuss the characteristics of student growth by taking nature, structure, and processes into consideration (Berger, 2002; Widick & Simpson, 1978). These ideas examine how students evolve dynamically and highlight important elements that affect students' academic journeys. While cognitive theories, like Perry's (1970), concentrate on changes in thinking and reasoning, psychosocial theories, like Erikson's (1968), explore identity development and interpersonal connections. Erikson's psychosocial development theory is based on phases of psychosocial development, investigating how students manage their interpersonal connections and identity construction while in university journey (Arnold & King, 1997). On the other hand, Perry's (1970) concept emphasizes how students' ability to reason and think skills change as they move through university life, with a particular focus on their intellectual and cognitive development (King, 2009; Zhang & Watkins, 2001).

The other theories and models for studying student development and change in university place more emphasis on the ecological and inter-individual sources of student growth. These models are eclectic in nature, identifying and assessing many sets of factors that are thought to impact one or more elements of transformation. Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Output model highlights the importance of student involvement in all facets of university life and how it affects their growth both academically and personally (Astin, 1984), whereas Chickering and Reisser's (1993) Seven Vectors define developmental characteristics. This approach offers a thorough

framework for comprehending student progress by identifying seven vectors of development, such as growing competence, controlling emotions, and increasing autonomy (Foubert et al, 2005). To provide a full understanding of student growth, Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) comprehensive model includes input variables (such as student backgrounds, individual characteristics), university experiences, mediating variables (such as student-campus fit), and output variables (such as cognitive, social, psychological and psychological outcomes).

The core of Tinto's (1993) student departure strategy is academic and social integration. Together, these ideas enhance the field's research and practice by providing a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic and multidimensional process of student transformation in higher education. Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure emphasizes the need of academic and social integration for student growth. Students grow intellectually and personally when they fit in with their institutions, strengthening their connections and abilities. A thorough framework for comprehending the reasons why students leave higher education institutions before earning their degrees is offered by Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure. The concept places a strong emphasis on how crucial social and academic integration are to students' persistence and success. Important elements of this theory include: (i) *pre-entry attributes* (prior academic achievements, family background and personal characteristics), (ii) *goals and commitments* (initial motivations to academic activities, commitment to the institution and commitment to career goals), (iii) *institutional experiences in both academic system* (interaction with the academic members and academic performance) and *social system* (peer interactions and extracurricular activities), (iv) *academic and social integration*, and (v) *external commitments* (factors outside the institution such as family responsibilities and employment). According to Tinto's model, higher education institutions may increase student retention by creating conditions that encourage social and academic integration. It will raise students' levels of commitment and satisfaction overall educational experience.

Cultivating effective educational practices requires a solid understanding of the relationship between higher education's student development theories and models student-centered learning and teaching (Chun & Evans, 2016). Theories of student development provide thorough frameworks that highlight the complex interplay of

cognitive, psychosocial, and attitudinal aspects of student growth. These models shed light on the elements that influence students' experiences, such as the standard of interactions, educational programs and their qualities, and campus environment. A setting that is supportive of holistic development is created by fusing these developmental viewpoints with student-centered learning strategies, which place a premium on customizing educational experiences for each individual student (Wright, 2011). It is possible for academics to create curriculum and learning environments, which support student-centered learning and encourage engagement, autonomy, and active involvement. It occurs by considering the variety of ways in which individuals progress intellectually and psychologically (Gibbs, 1981). To put it simply, the combination of theories about student development and student-centered learning philosophies strengthens our capacity to design engaging learning environments that speak to the unique and dynamic ways that students develop in higher education (Beattysatif, 2004). Fostering students' holistic development becomes crucial as they navigate the ever-changing landscape of higher education. As a result, adopting a student-centered learning approach puts students at the center of their educational journey and customizes experiences to support their growth as individuals and academic success.

Since a student-centered environment places a high value on customized learning experiences, develops critical thinking abilities, and promotes self-directed inquiry, it is essential for promoting overall student development. These learning ecosystems enable students to get a profound awareness of their own learning styles, interests, and skills by putting them at the center of their educational journey. This eventually positions them for success and adaptation throughout their lives.

2.2. Student-centered Ecosystems in Higher Education

The study of the impact of higher education on students is becoming one of the most popular research topics of higher education studies. A variety of ways have become the focus of attention on the impact of higher education on student development (Junco et al., 2011; Mayhew, 2016). Student-centered learning has taken center stage on higher education policy agenda (Todorovski et al., 2015). It has emerged as the guiding idea behind the anticipated reforms aimed at enhancing the standard of learning and

teaching in higher education all over the world. Hoidn (2020) has examined the policies and practices in the scope of student learning and teaching by taking theoretical foundations of those policies into consideration to provide prescriptive guidance. When looked at Klemenčič's (2020) research on student-centered teaching and learning in higher education, they can be divided into two main branches named framework of student-centered ecosystems and student agency.

Student-centered ecosystems framework is described by some higher education researchers such as Baeten et al. (2016), Barr and Tagg (1995), Klemenčič and Hoidn (2020). According to them, learning and teaching processes are integrated into and supported by larger institutional, national, and global context. Learning and teaching environments are made up of a range of parts and associated aspects, both material and human. These student-centered ecosystems in higher education are characterized as culturally conscious, flexible, and participatory systems of student-centered learning and teaching. Therefore, shifting from a teacher-centered to a student-centered paradigm involves more than just altering classroom procedures (Alfieri et al., 2011). It also entails thinking about and working on the many components of student-centered ecosystem in micro level (institution) and in macro level (system). An important report by Klemenčič et. al. (2020) is likewise built on the framework of student-centered ecosystems. According to this, 10 core elements of student-centered ecosystems are identified. On the focus of student-centered learning and teaching, (1) policies and regulations, (2) educational programs and pedagogy, (3) assessment and evaluation, (4) quality assurance mechanisms, (5) flexible learning pathways, (6) learning assistance, (7) teaching assistance, (8) active learning platforms, (9) information and communication technologies, and (10) partnerships and connections for community are critical to reinforce the process.

Creating and implementing an effective *educational program and pedagogy* is the first step toward more inclusive student-centered learning in higher education (Doyle, 2008). Diversifying educational resources and teaching practices to meet the needs of each student is the goal of effective educational program and pedagogy (Bovill et al., 2011; Eberlein et al. 2008). It also integrates suitable *information and communication technologies* (De Wit, 2018) in addition to modifying *assessment and evaluation* processes. Actually, it is necessary to ensure that they are responsive to the needs and

expectations of students in real life situations. In order to direct *quality assurance mechanisms* (European University Association [EUA], 2019) performance indicators are necessary to quantify student-centered learning and teaching presence at institutional, regional and national levels (Klemenčič et al, 2020).

Flexible learning paths enable students to select the most appropriate courses to study as well as personalized ways to participate in their learning process. For instance, higher education institutions may provide flexible dates for taking classes or meeting instructors, alternatives for students who has already learned some of the course subject, and a variety of other techniques. *Learning assistance* is critical to ensure that students who enroll in higher education graduate from their chosen study program effectively. This includes preventing students from dropping out of higher education because of personal or learning issues experienced throughout their university life (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

It is not enough for institutional leaders to trust that their instructors clearly know how to make their courses more effective and attractive. Instructors should be provided with *teaching assistance* to ensure that they are aware of how to make their courses more inclusive (Cannon & Newble, 2000; Chism, 2004)). *Active learning platforms* allow a diversified student population, coming from different backgrounds, to utilize learning materials. In addition, inclusive spaces must represent the variety of their student population in the objects of materials they show and the learning resources they provide (Klemenčič et al., 2020).

In the scope of *partnership and collaboration*, universities can effectively reach out to their internal and external stakeholders. They can address the issues like inadequate representation or the low level of participation or academic achievement by engaging with and collaborating with community partners such as other higher education institutions, employers, and various societal organizations. If we say that two things are complementing each other, we indicate that they function as gears or components of an ecosystem (Dakovic & Zhang, 2021). A learning and teaching system is more likely to work as a student-centered learning and teaching ecosystem if more of these components are present. As a result, it will be necessary to create institutional or national *policies and regulations* that are specifically focused on student-centered

learning and teaching as well as to modify the quality assurance methods to make them appropriate for the context of student-centered approach (Dakovic & Zhang, 2021). It is seen that one of the major foundations of modern student-centered education studies is student agency (Healey et al., 2014).

The natural link that exists between student-centered ecosystems and the development of student autonomy in higher education represents a critical paradigm shift. Student agency grows out of the student-centered environment, which is defined by an educational framework that prioritizes learner needs, preferences, and autonomy. The ability of students to take deliberate, self-directed activities during their academic journey is known as student agency. It is most effectively expressed in settings that support customized learning and a variety of learning preferences. This mutually beneficial interaction creates a dynamic learning environment in which students actively participate in the collaborative creation of knowledge in addition to helping them more effectively manage their academic endeavors. Thus, higher education is propelled into a domain of increased participation, customized growth, and the democratization of intellectual discovery by the convergence of student-centered ecosystems and the fostering of student agency.

Student engagement is a critical component of student-centered ecosystems, influencing academic achievement and overall learning experiences. Student-centered ecosystems prioritize satisfying students' different needs and interests. It results in a learning environment that is both inclusive and motivating. Engagement in such environments is vital because it promotes active engagement, critical thinking, and a better knowledge of the content. When students are engaged, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning, show higher levels of motivation, and persevere in the face of a struggle. This engagement is aided by learning practices that encourage collaboration, autonomy, and real-world application of knowledge. Furthermore, engaged students are more likely to build meaningful connections with their surroundings, leading to a supportive environment.

2.3. Student Engagement

Higher education researchers have attempted to characterize this varied and complicated concept. Kuh et al. (2008) viewed engagement to include the amount of

time and effort students devote to worthwhile pursuits in educational setting as well as the effort higher education institutions put out to implement good educational process. In this view, the educational institution is responsible for student engagement. It is accomplished by the acts of students supported by their peers, instructors, and universities. Students' and instructors' appropriate behavior promotes engagement.

Researchers that advocate for a more comprehensive approach contest this limited understanding of engagement. For instance, according to Fredricks et al. (2004), engagement encompasses students' behavioral changes as well as their cognitive development and emotional commitment in their social and academic learnings. Cognitive engagement includes in-depth acquiring of skills and new knowledge, individual meaning production and transformation of meaning (Marton & Säljö, 1976). Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) underlines that relationships outside of the institution or emotions of security and belonging within it are related to psychological wellbeing through emotional engagement. A relational framework was presented by Solomonides et al. (2012) for identifying some of the qualities that support learners in making sense of their experiences. Solomonides et al. (2012) proposed an affinitive framework for identifying some of the characteristics that aid students in interpreting their experiences. The students become engaged, when they experience themselves changing and evolving while studying disciplinary and professional material.

These types of definitions typically approach engagement through the prism of the classroom. However, it has been increasingly recognized the significance of external factors thanks to the conducted studies. By taking this lack into consideration, Carey (2013) defines engagement as a broad concept that includes a feeling of belonging, individuality as well as participation, corporate procedures and structures with active participation in teaching and learning activities in the institution. Similarly, Lawson and Lawson (2013) broaden their scope even further by using a multidimensional approach to student engagement. They tried to synthesize the concept of student engagement in depth and with different dimensions such as students, instructors, institution and external environment. While engagement takes place in the classroom atmosphere, Kahu (2013) argues that it has both immediate and long-term effects on people, including satisfaction, general wellbeing, civic involvement, and personal growth. Individual's wellbeing, inclusion as citizens, and relationships within and

outside the system in which teaching and learning activities are carried out are always emphasized. Zepke (2018) provides that in a personal communication, Leach (2015) made this description to support their all-inclusive engagement strategy:

> "*Student engagement is understood as the time and effort students invest in educational activities. The consequences of their engagement - their success in their study, their personal growth and the contribution they make to society through active citizenship – are affected by personal and contextual antecedents as well as the actions taken by teachers, institutions, families and friends to facilitate their engagement in an active partnership*" (p.65).

With these diverse perspectives, engagement is no longer limited to academic environments like classrooms., but instead include active students in the political, social, and cultural issues of larger community contexts. In fact, engagement becomes a component of life wide learning experiences that affect higher education students in the classroom, on campus or off campus. Such diverse and numerous attempts to understand student engagement raise several concerns about what engagement in education means. Can we still conceive of engagement as a unified construct after considering the many definitions offered by academics, or is engagement a spectrum of ideas that have been combined for simplicity?

Although definitions are common in academic writing, their usefulness in comprehending multidimensional and complex constructs like engagement has been questioned. Such constructs, which are not clearly identified due to their complex nature, suffer from confusing information. These concepts, like engagement, are frequently founded on opposing points of view and are not likely to result in consistent or long-lasting solutions.

Engagement is a complex concept that should be viewed as a holistic and lifelong experience, not just a series of tasks. It involves students setting their own learning goals and often challenging the norm. Defining engagement within a specific framework can limit its understanding because it doesn't account for individual and contextual differences. Therefore, student engagement is better seen as a lens to explore various perspectives on effective teaching and learning in higher education.

Student engagement has cognitive, affective and behavioral viewpoints. Student engagement in extracurricular social activities including athletics, dance, and theater

is an element of the behavioral dimension. That means behavioral engagement is related to observable behaviors and performance. Affective engagement includes the student's positive response to instructors, friends and school, and indicates commitment to the institution and willingness to work (Fredricks et al., 2004). Finn and Zimmer (2012) explain affective engagement with the concept of identification with educational institution, while explaining the behavioral dimension with the concept of participation. Cognitive engagement emphasizes the student's academic investment in the institution, availability and diligence to exert the required effort against challenging and complex problems (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Similarly, some researchers have examined the construct of student engagement with its academic, social and psychological dimensions. This allows for the multidimensional conceptualization of student engagement, which includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. According to D'Errico et al. (2016), additionally, it has been observed that student engagement can appear in both positive emotions like enjoyment, pride, and satisfaction.; and unfavorable emotions like rage, worry, and irritation. While it has been demonstrated that student accomplishment in areas like attention, immersion, and problem-solving is correlated with positive engagement levels, students' intrinsic motivation is undermined by negative valences, which cause disengagement, avoidance, and withdrawal (Pekrun & Linnenbrink Garcia, 2012). The high level of students' engagement allows them to see the elements of their teaching process as a part of themselves.

The same is true for the opposite, because, in order to increase student engagement, it is necessary to use the elements in the teaching and learning process in favor of the students and to ensure that they are satisfied with the process for educational institutions. The point that makes student engagement important is that it significantly affects the education process and is one of the important indicators of the outcomes of educational process. For students to have a successful and effective learning process, it is important to keep their engagement to the university at a high level. Increasing university student's engagement has become critical to improve their learning experiences, wellbeing, and return on investment in higher education. Therefore, strong data on university students' engagement perceptions and its correlations with academic success, course-work completion, graduation, and university integration are

critical for educational administrators and education policy makers. For this reason, research on student engagement is important in terms of bringing the results of the study, which aims to reflect student engagement in an institutional and cultural context, to educational stakeholders.

In this thesis, the concept of student engagement is examined through the lens of how university students define their experiences and expectations of university. It includes academic, psychological, and social dimensions. The definition of student engagement used here aligns with the view that engagement encompasses students' active involvement and investment in their educational experiences. Data collection involves a comprehensive approach, incorporating different sources, to capture the multifaceted nature of engagement. In this study, student engagement is examined as a dynamic and relational construct influenced by various interacting factors. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how students' dreams, expectations, and experiences shape their engagement, rather than relying on a restrictive definition.

2.3.1. Theories of Student Engagement

Given the variety of definitions and viewpoints that place an emphasis on the doing, it is somewhat surprising that student engagement has any theoretical foundations at all. According to Kahn (2014) the theoretical foundations of student engagement studies are weak. The researchers that study engagement largely agree on a few broad theoretical approaches. According to constructionist knowledge theory, which is one these approaches, each learner gains knowledge by connecting the new information they get from the outside world to the knowledge they already possess. This viewpoint holds that knowledge of reality is constructed, not given or discovered. Therefore, it is stated that all knowledge and all meaningful reality that reveals itself are related to the part of what people create in their minds that turns into behavior (Crotty, 1998). Knowledge is constructed via interactions between individuals and their surroundings, which are essentially shared and transmitted within social contexts. The researchers like Piaget and Papert have used this theory of knowledge to study how children learn (Ackerman, 2004). For them, action is how knowledge is constructed, how the world is evaluated, and how symbols are used to describe things. A constructionist does not view knowledge as a commodity to be shared, stored, remembered, and used again. It

is actively developed via individual and collective experiences in the communities. Ackerman (2004) says that, in a similar vein, the world does not stand still and just wait to be discovered, but is instead gradually fashioned and formed again by human interactions. For instance, Krause and Coates (2008) state that the students who actively engage in activities with an educational goal build learning in higher education.

The notion that engagement studies are student-centered reflects the constructionist concept because of view of construction of knowledge. By making use of adult learning theory and the work of Barr and Tagg (1995), this may be supported. A learning paradigm established by Barr and Tagg (1995) emphasizes individual learning so that the learner may produce beneficial results for themselves, society, and the economy. Students contribute to the creation of their own knowledge. Together with their instructors and higher education institutions, students are jointly responsible for their education, rather than being a passive receiver of their instructors' words. Through engagement, this cooperative effort produces significant effects. Adult learning theories place a strong emphasis on self-directive, experiential, and transformational learning. They are grounded in humanism and pragmatism. The theory behind self-directed learning is that adult learners are independent decision-makers. Self-directed learners need a lot of control over the learning process, according to Knowles (1983), to accomplish their long-term goals. In student centered pedagogy, a prominent place has been given to experiential learning as a source of knowledge and central to the production and acquisition of knowledge (Usher et al., 1997). People connect with their own world by reflecting on, analyzing and synthesizing, and reconstructing their past experiences. To enable of this opportunity to the learners is the responsibility of educators and educational institutions to aid in this process.

However, it would be inaccurate to characterize engagement research as constructionist and student-centered, even though it seems uncomplicated. Krause (2012) described a "*wicked problem*" as complex, with competing facts and no clear solution, which fits student engagement. To understand engagement, we need a theoretical view that recognizes its complexity. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest using complexity theory, which sees engagement and learning as adaptive systems with

many interacting factors, rejecting simple cause-and-effect explanations. This theory uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and views the system as creating new understandings on its own. Researchers must see student engagement as a dynamic and relational environment where nonlinear learning and teaching breakthroughs happen.

Lawson and Lawson (2013), who approached the construct of engagement in interpretative perspective, examined from three main dimensions named emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. The fourth of them is a socioecological dimension, which focuses on repercussions on communities, institutions, and classrooms that are shaped by a specific but possibly transient political environment. Eclectic understanding described as a variety of perspectives on engagement. Lawson and Lawson (2013) stems from the outputs and contributions of educational research. It is backed by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who identify two main directions that promote engagement research approaches in summaries of the learning research in higher education in stock. According to them, one direction includes ideologies that emphasize internalized personal growth. This family of scholars is interested in psychological aspects including identity formation, motivation, and cognitive growth. The other dimension is more concerned with external forces than internal ones. Social practices connected to climate, culture, social structure, and politics are considered as having an influence on students' learning. However, the two dimensions are not entirely distinct from one another. When discussing, for instance, studies into how family and other background variables affect students' learning, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) admit that their respective fields of study overlap. Such influences between people and their surroundings might be viewed as ecological.

Motivation is emphasized as a required but insufficient orientation for engagement research in one significant methodology (Wentzel, 2012). Self-determination theory, expectation theory, reinforcement theory, goal setting theory, self-efficacy theory, and cognitive evaluation theories are just a few of the motivational theories that have been used to study motivation for engagement. Self-belief is a key motivator, according to Schuetz (2008), who sought to create a convincing theoretical foundation for motivation in engagement. Additionally, she discovered that the Self-Determination

Theory was a perfect fit for the study data she used, which came from a survey of students at American Community Colleges (Ryan & Deci 2000). One of the crucial components of engagement is self-determination strengthened in environments that foster feelings of self-efficacy or competence in a social situation. The practice of autonomy and decision-making is thus encouraged by such emotions, leading to a stronger sense of autonomy. Strong relationships between motivation, autonomy, and competence are discussed by Ryan and Deci (2000). In addition, they show that relatedness is significant for intrinsic motivation, at the very least distally. Secure relationships with people, a feeling of social or cultural belonging, or connection with concepts might be examples of this. It is important that self-determination helps people to satisfy their demands for relational drive, competence, and autonomy. Large-scale empirical studies have provided strong support for self-determination theory, which works effectively to describe the motivation and initiative needed for engagement.

Theoretical frameworks outside of psychology are often applied in engagement research. Engagement occurs simultaneously in a variety of contexts, including group or individual learning activities, class discussions, institutional principles, institutional culture, and norms, as well as activities involving families and various communities. It is believed that student engagement processes are relational and dynamic, including continual connections between students, their networks, and their settings by Eccles and Wang (2012). While certain venues, like classrooms, are specifically geared toward teaching and learning, other types of venues are more subtly rooted in politics and educational policies. Institutions, instructors, and peers, for instance, operate within a policy environment that is predicated on assumptions about student success, which is frequently construed establishing high levels of course participation and broadening or expanding socialization. Along with these, it is also aimed that individuals adopt lifelong learning (Yorke, 2006). The contexts in which engagement happens or does not occur is crucial for understanding engagement, according to Wentzel (2012), just as significant as motivational states. However, because circumstances vary, social skills are necessary for both students and instructors to interact with others successfully. Socially adept learners work together to attain targeted group and individual purposes, which is underlined by Lawson and Lawson (2013). They develop positive relationships with a variety of individuals, such as students in different departments in the institution, part-time instructors and

practitioners, disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students who have family obligations, instructors and educational administrations of the institution. Students that are socially adept collaborate with others in research and governance of educational institutions (Janosz, 2012). This broader social aspect has grown to be a key area of interest for engagement research.

In the past, the importance of engagement outside of higher education lectures has been largely ignored. But more and more experts are recognizing the comprehensive and more holistic nature of engagement. Family and community life are now considered crucial settings and engagement motivators in higher education research designs (Wentzel, 2012). There are two key theoretical presumptions concerning engagement. In the first, engagement is shown as a conceptual link connecting students' classroom behavior to their surrounding social situations. According to Lawson and Lawson (2013), the second places engagement within the ecosystem of social connections. n higher education approaches, these presumptions regarding ecological aspects of student engagement have been extensively investigated. For instance, McInnis (2003) noted that an increase in part-time students has led to an altered state of engagement in higher education. Moreover, half of the students questioned in Australia by James et al. (2010) said that having a job impacted with their academic performance. Such students in this position believed that their lives should revolve around studies, not the other way around. According to McInnis (2003), engagement must now be negotiated with university students themselves rather than assumed. Seven variables, according to Yorke and Longden's (2008) research, helped to explain disengagement. Problems with employment and finances, and social integration challenges into institutional culture are two of these factors because of background came from outside the educational institution, whereas five of them had more to do with institutional problems regarding quality of teaching and evaluation mechanisms and personal considerations like selecting courses or choosing the departments. Approximately half of the students with part-time jobs cited family obligations and responsibilities as a justification for looking for employment, according to James et al. (2010). Others, especially indigenous students, were caring for their families while some wished to become more financially independent from their families. In addition, Shirley and Hargreaves (2021) focus on the enemies of student engagement. They try to understand what these enemies are, be prepared to

face them, and understand how to fight them. This is where sociological viewpoints come into play, combining traditional sociological theory with current research of educational institutions and society. Disengagement can take five various forms, which frequently overlap. These can be listed like that: dissatisfaction with standardized learning and testing, disconnection between educational programs and real-life problems, lack of partnership between educational institution and society, disempowerment of learning and teaching opportunities, student distraction due to digital technologies.

In this study, student engagement in higher education is primarily defined through a functional and ideological approach. This perspective aligns with Kuh's (2009b, p. 683) definition, which emphasizes "*the time and effort students devote to activities related to the desired outcomes of university education and what the university does to encourage their participation in these activities*." Therefore, the focus of this research is centered on this definition, highlighting the importance of both student effort and institutional support in fostering engagement. In addition, within this framework, this study implies to the interpretative perspective of Lawson and Lawson (2013). I tried to examine academic, psychological and social aspects in terms of student engagement by considering environmental factors of university in holistic way. It is similar approach for Lawson and Lawson (2013) examining student engagement across emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Additionally, it considers the socioecological dimension, focusing on the impacts of engagement on communities, institutions, and outside of classrooms. Similarly, in this study, it is aimed to understand how student engagement is formed and maintained not only at the individual level but also within broader social and environmental contexts. This eclectic approach highlights multidimensionality of student engagement.

In summary, student engagement theories offer a multifaceted view of how learners interact with their educational environment. These theories focus on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. A key theoretical foundation is constructivist knowledge theory. It suggests that students build knowledge through active participation and by connecting new information to what they already know. This aligns with student-centered learning paradigms, such as Barr and Tagg's (1995) model, which emphasizes self-directed learning and personal responsibility for

educational outcomes. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) further contributes by highlighting the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. Engagement is also viewed through a socioecological lens. It is shaped not only by individual actions but also by institutional, social, and environmental factors. Complexity theory complements this by treating engagement as a dynamic and adaptive system. In this system, learning emerges from multiple interacting influences. Thus, engagement is not static but a relational process that requires both student effort and institutional support.

2.3.2. Measurement Approaches to Student Engagement

The existing literature is rich with many explanations of what student engagement is, what it does, and how it does it. That means there are various studies examined the meanings, functions and conceptual framework of student engagement (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Researchers are challenged to recognize the connections, similar and different properties, and uniqueness in the literature and then to make sense of it in light of its endemic diversity and complexity.

The surveys like the North American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for student engagement have been particularly significant for understanding student development. The NSSE aims to evaluate how much students engage in effective educational practices that have been scientifically determined as well as what they take away from their university experience (Kuh, 2001). From positivist paradigm, through quantitative survey, student engagement and experience may be measured and validated. While student surveys can be useful in gathering information for a comprehensive evaluation of institutional operations in relation to the student experience, they also allow for rapid identification of student (dis)satisfaction with specific student services. On the other hand, when wider judgments about how university affects students are reached, this positivist approach has a number of limitations. The focus of these methodological criticisms is that such surveys are a snapshot view without reflecting the dynamic, contextual, developmental and personal developmental nature of the student experience. These surveys are based on predetermined categories of what institutional researchers expect the correlations between university circumstances and student engagement. Given the complex

interdependencies and relationships that underline student interactions and experiences, these assumptions might not always be realistic. Another drawback in positivist paradigm is its inability to see student engagement as multifaceted, dynamic, and developmental. In addition, this paradigm has a presumption that students make rational decisions at common starting points (Sabri, 2011).

Student choices regarding engagement are a very dynamic process that are concurrently impacted by a variety of different elements. According to Crozier et al. (2008), yet, institutionalist and behavioralist literature derived from survey-based research tends to oversimplify this process. Notable qualitative research has been done that emphasizes variables that shape student engagement in addition structural variables. In traditional sociological investigations of how class, race, gender, and cultural capital impact student agency, the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of students are given their due. For instance, Stephenson and Clegg (2011) imply that the ability of students to take action to bring about their future selves is regulated by class in their examination of students' choices of extracurricular activities. Reay et al. (2005) discovered that the choice of study was not primarily dependent on rational individual judgments in a study of working-class students. It is impacted by highly social and familial elements, networks and relationships, and the capacity to distinguish between uneven social and educational opportunities. Some of this study also emphasizes the significance of socialization and social ties in shaping student engagement. More explicit emphasis on socialization may be found in the social network literature, such as studies of the relationship between Facebook use and civic involvement (Valenzuela et al. 2009) and the research on the social aspect of learning (Ashwin 2009). For instance, Ashwin (2009) emphasizes the complex ways in which instructors and students impact one another during teaching-learning process. When examined some aspects that influence how these learning and teaching interactions, it includes student identities, academic identities, disciplinary knowledge, and institutional cultures. On the other hand, some researchers investigate the function of emotion in affecting student engagement (Smith et al., 2007; Kahu et al., 2015).

As a different approach, Kahu (2013) has made significant progress with a comprehensive strategy for studying student engagement. She deconstructs the key elements that influence student engagement and their interactions. It is emphasized the

significance of the larger sociocultural context in the scope of student engagement. In addition to structural issues such as university culture, governance, policies, educational program, assessment, and student background, family support, Kahu (2013) underlines psychological issues such as teaching and learning motivation, skills, stress, wellbeing, etc. on student engagement. The engagement is then directed by affect (interest and belonging), cognition (deep learning, self-regulation), and behavior (time and effort, interaction, and participation). Kahu (2013) suggests that the effects of engagement are dual in domain, namely, academic and social. Kahu (2013) emphasizes the individuality of each experience. Therefore, it is the necessity for in-depth research on specific student demographics by illustrating the wide range of complicated aspects influencing student engagement. However, this approach has an important weakness in that it is unable to account for how various temporal orientations influence students' behavior. As an essential part in sustaining agentic orientations as the socio-psychological impacts on students' present perceptions of the environment, which Kahu's theory addresses, are previous habits and future predictions. Past habits and future projections are as important as the socio-psychological effects of students' current perceptions about the environment.

There are no quick cuts, however the research literature identifies a typical frame of reference for engagement research. Particularly important are three main presumptions. The first is that engagement may be improved through teaching and other interventions since it is flexible. The second is that learning may be directly accessed through engagement (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). In other words, meaningful learning outcomes frequently follow when engagement happens (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2004). The third is that motivation of students are logically separate from engagement in some points (Finn and Zimmer, 2012). Engagement is considered to be the affective, cognitive, and behavioral activation of student motivation, which may indicate the direction of their energy toward educational institution or class experiences (Assor, 2012). Because of this, some researchers such as Borup et al. (2020) and Skinner and Pitzer (2012) described engagement as energy in motion. In this sense, many educational scholars examine the concept of engagement within the framework of school life that is, what occurs in classes and inside the boundaries of the educational buildings. Researchers in this area

frequently concentrate on students' engagement in academics at school as well as their engagement in specific classroom activities (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

To represent the temporality as well as the multi-level relational contexts of student engagement, it is necessary to go to micro roots of student agency. By such an approach, I hope to develop a better understanding of which factors that influence student engagement and how engagement shapes through time. A worldview that attempts to explain how broad structural factors in higher education impact students cannot demonstrate reality. Instead, conducting empirical research on smaller units or systems may be more beneficial for student growth. With this approach, the relatively-newly established universities in Türkiye, whose student engagement status cannot be predicted compared to well-established universities, constitute the framework of this study. In this approach, rather than confining oneself to the analysis of causal linkages between predefined elements and expected results, suggestions concerning the sustainability of specific settings for the exercise of student engagement can be developed.

2.3.3. Core Dimensions of Student Engagement

Higher education researchers, practitioners, and policy makers have all given the understandings and conceptualization of student engagement more consideration in recent years. Theory of involvement by Astin (1999), the dimensions of student engagement named as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive by Fredricks et al. (2004). Kahu (2013) and Kahu and Nelson (2018) have significantly shaped and improved the comprehension of this complicated phenomenon from the perspective of sociocultural theories of engagement. In addition, the difficulty and depth of student engagement at the point of theorizing brought some criticisms (Boekaerts, 2016; Zepke, 2018). Research has followed to examine the impact of the quality of student engagement on student outcomes (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Trowler, 2010).

According to Fredricks et al. (2004), student engagement involves three main factors, namely, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components. In connection to academic demand, these categories define collectively observable behaviors, affective reactions, psychological engagement, and purposeful activities. The following part tries to summarize these different dimensions of engagement.

Cognitive engagement

Cognitive engagement refers to the mental effort and investment students put into their learning processes. It involves deep processing of information, critical thinking, and meaningful interaction with academic content. It describes awareness and readiness to put up the work required to comprehend difficult concepts and master challenging skills, using leading-edge learning strategies and active learning self-regulation (Boekaerts & Niemivirta, 2000; Fredricks et al., 2004). The cognitive engagement of students to learning, which can vary from memory to the use of self-control skills to aid in deeper comprehension, is known as cognitive engagement in the learning and teaching literature (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Regardless of instructional methods, research demonstrates that meaningful learning depends on high levels of cognitive engagement (Guthrie et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2005). In fact, the Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) place cognitive engagement at its core. The significance of cognitive engagement to learning is highlighted, among other things, by Chickering and Gamson's seven principles. It emphasizes active learning and interaction between students and instructors. Student achievement has been directly correlated with deep cognitive engagement. According to Greene (2015), students must transition from superficial to meaningful cognitive processing to develop cognitive engagement. Shallow processing can lead to sustainability of rote learning, which is most often caused by a lack of strong interaction with learning materials. However, higher-level cognitive learning outcomes are supported by deep cognitive processing, which enables the sort of mental connections and knowledge expansion that is necessary (Christopher et al., 2005).

Additionally, according to Robb (2004), students who are cognitively engaged in the learning process reflect carefully on the newly supplied knowledge. As a result, they more easily employ self-regulated learning techniques that deepen their grasp of the subject matter. The learners who have self-regulation skills can distinguish between knowledge and skills that they have and do not have. Such individuals can evaluate the academic tasks and establish learning objectives. Additionally, the self-regulated

learners keep an eye on and control their thoughts and actions. When it is necessary, they adapt their learning strategies to ensure academic achievement.

According to Stoney and Oliver (1999) split cognitive engagement into higher and lower order thinking. Higher order thinking students engage in academic tasks for a significantly longer period of time and with greater enthusiasm. Because of this, they are able to learn more than people with low thinking orders. Lower level thinking hence demands less cognitive effort while performing operational tasks. However, in order to gain higher order thinking skills, individuals must be able to reflect on their learning experiences and combine new knowledge with prior knowledge. Additionally, McLoughlin and Luca (2000) used the content analysis approach to study students' cognitive engagement and higher order thinking in online learning environments. The research revealed that the majority of discussion forum postings were in the cognitive interaction phase, exchanging and comparing information, such as just elaborating on already-known material.

Behavioral engagement

Behavioral engagement refers to students' outwardly visible actions, such as involvement and participation in academic-oriented activities, which are considered crucial for achieving effective academic outcomes and preventing dropout. Academic effort, perseverance, focus, attention, and lack of behavioral issues, such as adhering to university rules and refraining from disruptive actions, are all considered (Fredricks et al., 2004).

In various educational contexts, the concept of behavioral engagement is used to signify different things (Hospel et al., 2016). According to Fredricks et al. (2004), behavioral engagement refers to a student's conduct while completing a learning task, including the effort, contribution to their own learning, and persistence. Firstly, studies on behavioral engagement look at how the students behave in relation to the rules, norms, and expectations of the educational settings or institution. When a student behaves positively, such as by adhering to institutional expectations, this is a sign of higher student engagement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). The second component of behavioral engagement is student involvement in school-related activities, such as extracurricular activities or in-class activities. Research on student participation in

institution-supported events, such as orientation programs in different fields, student clubs, and interactions with administrators and faculty focuses on behavioral engagement because they offer insight into the student's drive to be a part of the institution (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012). The third component of behavioral engagement is in interest of students in their academic responsibilities. They refer to specific behavioral acts they take to show their willingness to participate in class activities and to master difficult subject. It enables the students to exhibit certain behavioral engagement, such as focus, asking questions, persistence, and participating in in-class discussions (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Even though the concept of behavioral engagement is well defined and has been investigated in face-to-face scenarios in multiple research studies, students' activities are seen to change in online contexts (Louwrens & Hartnett, 2015). However, essential definitions of the construct used in traditional educational environments do not significantly differ from those used to define the nature of behavioral engagement in online learning (Casimiro, 2015). It gauges how much time students spend on tasks, how persistent they are in completing the assigned task, and how much effort they put into the activity at hand. Additionally, it is critical to account how students behave when following directions and participating in online activities (McGowan & Gunderson, 2010).

Emotional Engagement

The multiplicity of definitions provided in the engagement literature shows that there is no universal agreement on the specific meaning of emotional engagement. For instance, Finn and Zimmer (2012) and Appleton et al. (2006) described emotional engagement as a feeling of belonging and affiliation to educational institution. Alternately, from the perspective of Skinner et al. (2008), emotional engagement refers to the states of modes like interest and enthusiasm that are important for student engagement. According to Fredricks et al. (2004), emotional engagement refers to students' emotive responses to assignments, classes, professors, academics, and university life in general. The willingness to complete the task, the sense of belonging at university and the value of the educational achievements, the presence of interest

and excitement, absence of anxiety, stress and boredom are all examples of the emotional dimension of engagement.

According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), emotional engagement is related to the cumulative and long-lasting emotional experiences in which students have and reflects the enthusiasm for their university education. When participating in on-campus and off-campus events, positive emotions like pleasure, pride, excitement, enthusiasm, openness, joy, and curiosity may be shown as a result of emotional engagement according to Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2004). Students who have an emotional engagement may comprehend the purposes and relevance of their social interactions and academic responsibilities. (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Achievement feelings throughout learning differ by learning task. These favorable feelings were also discovered to be related to behavioral engagement (D'Errico et al., 2016).

Although emotional engagement is essential for active and effective learning, the literature pays little attention to the emotional aspects of students' experiences in this regard (Askham, 2008; Kahu 2013). Student outcomes, including student achievement, have generally been examined in terms of cognitive and behavioral aspects in the relevant literature, and emotional dimension has been ignored. However, according to Pekrun and Linnbrink-Garcia (2012), emotions are intimately related to learning, success, life satisfaction, and health. Positive feelings like confidence, pride, joy, and enthusiasm can result in a long-lasting psychological engagement in higher education that extends outside of the classroom (Pekrun et al., 2002).

2.3.4. Student Engagement in Online Learning

Higher education institutions have converted some courses at the undergraduate level into entirely virtual classes which are delivered synchronously or asynchronously. This has occurred sometimes in compulsory situations and sometimes within the scope of digital integration. There are various significant benefits of distance learning such time and space flexibility and particularly efficient solutions for logistic convenience and limitations in the number of instructors. Adopting distance learning technologies calls for careful strategic planning that addresses the creation of a solid technological base, the training of instructors and students to learn and teach online effectively, and most importantly, the appropriate design and development of instruction (Yıldırım &

Adnan, 2019). At this point, in the use of digital technologies that allow mass access, students' expectations and needs should not be ignored in terms of quality in education, as in traditional learning environments.

In addition to this expanding focus on student engagement, digital technology has emerged as a critical component of higher education, touching many elements of the student experience (Selwyn, 2016). International awareness of the value of information and communication technologies (ICTs) skills and digital literacy is expanding, as is understanding of the value of engaged citizenship (Redecker, 2017). Technology has the capacity to intensify learning and teaching processes and enhance student self-regulation and self-efficacy (Kerres, 2013). As a result, using technology predicts high student engagement (Chen et al., 2010).

Because of the multidimensional structure of student engagement, educational technology research has failed to create a common terminology for discussing student engagement, resulting in undiscovered part of the field in details. The power of educational technology to promote student engagement has long been recognized (Bond et al., 2020). However, when technology and students are brought together, it does not mean that student engagement is ensured. In other words, like a simple mathematical equation, it cannot be said technology plus students equals engagement. On the contrary, technology can encourage disengagement and inhibit rather than enhance learning if not well planned and used (Howard et al., 2016).

Computers and information technology are helpful in boosting student engagement, according to the vast majority of studies on technology and education (Hu & Kuh, 2001, Nelson et al., 2005). For instance, asynchronous instructional technology, according to Robinson and Hullinger's (2008) research, allows students more time for reflection and critical thinking, which in turn promotes higher order thinking abilities including analysis, synthesis, reasoning, and knowledge transfer. Computers and information technology are valuable for increasing student engagement, according to studies on the topic of technology and education. When done through active, inquiry-driven instructional pedagogies, online learning may inspire students to employ higher order abilities like problem solving, teamwork, and stimulation, according to Duderstadt et al. (2002). In addition, participatory elements have been incorporated

into the majority of online course designs. As a result, students attending online courses are expected to work cooperatively, which is an essential aspect of student engagement (Thurmond & Wambach, 2004).

The results of research on the relationship between technology and learning outcomes, aside from increasing student engagement, have been conflicting. Using information from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Kuh and his colleagues have written a number of publications about this subject. In the research conducted by Hu and Kuh (2001), the authors proposed a favorable relationship between students' use of computers and other information technologies and their self-reported gains in science and technology, job preparedness, and intellectual progress.

Although adopting computer technology in education has numerous advantages, there are drawbacks as well. Online learning and the usage of technology have drawn criticism for the possibility that they may disadvantage certain student demographics. According to several research, characteristics such as socioeconomic status (Gladieux & Swail, 1999) and institutional resources (Hu & Kuh, 2001) have a considerable impact on how students use computers and the Internet and how much use they make of them. In other words, it can be a tool for participation gap for some students (Jenkins, 2006). Additionally, some researchers claimed that for students with specific learning styles, the absence of face-to-face interactions in online learning may diminish the quality of education (Terrell & Dringus, 2000). According to Sanders and George (2017), the physical presence and unplanned learning opportunities that commonly occur in a face-to-face context, such a spontaneous conversation or overheard remarks during a break, cannot be totally replaced by a communication device.

2.3.5. Student Engagement Practices in Higher Education

In the scope of student engagement, student union-led initiatives, projects, and conversations in higher education institutions aim to promote debate, reflection, improvements, and projects related to educational growth. The international push for student-university staff partnerships, often known as student engagement, has attracted a lot of funding and attention. In this part, some best student engagement practices in higher education institutions are mentioned. As mentioned above, the construct of

student engagement and the field of research belongs to were first developed with an emphasis on participation in the curriculum or in the classroom (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). For instance, it is intended to be measured using surveys like the NSSE (2019) in an effort to guide improvements. Particularly in the UK or larger Western higher education settings, the construct of student engagement has more recently been adopted to describe the methods whereby students and faculty members collaborate to discuss and conduct research to advise improvements in instructional innovations and quality assurance mechanisms (Gravett et al., 2019). Student engagement practices have been associated with various descriptions under the roof of higher education institutions like (a) students as partners, (b) student voice, (c) students taking responsibility and (d) student representation (Bryson, 2014; Lowe and Dunne, 2017).

Students as partners of institution

Many higher education institutions share the desire to work with their students as partners and develop institutional partnerships with them. It relates to strategic cooperative decision-making and local collaborative curriculum and service design (Bovill et al., 2016). Another definition of partnership is a method of operation that all higher education business should be embodied. Eight partnership principles that are central to partnership programs across the world were described in the foundational study of Healey et al. (2014) on partnerships. These partnership principles are empowerment, responsibility, openness to challenge, genuineness, reciprocity, sense of community, trust, and inclusion. Student engagement approaches frequently aim to create a partnership where university members and students share equally in decision-making process, the value of contributions, and perhaps even the workload. It applies to both modest learning and teaching research projects and cross-institutional projects carried out in collaboration between the student units and higher education institutions. These collaboration initiatives' practicality and inclusivity, however, must also be considered. These concerns lead to conflicts over issues like scalability, accessibility, logistics, measurement. However, in recent years, the literature on students working as partners has grown almost as quickly as student engagement. It is the result of an international movement called students as partners that is changing higher education from the micro to the macro level (Bryson, 2015; Mercer-Mapstone, 2019).

The teams working on educational improvement encourage students to take on student-partnership positions like makers of change in the United Kingdom, the USA and in some European countries increasingly (Marie et al., 2016). These initiatives allow students to actively contribute to improving university procedures, the curriculum, and the overall student experience. They can take the form of small research student collaboration projects or massive higher education-wide initiatives (Healey et al., 2014). Universities in the United Kingdom have prioritized these procedures and actions in order to improve students' educational experiences and satisfy the requirements with educational policies (QAA, 2012). International practices of student engagement have grown as a result of the adoption enhancement programs as well as scholarship of learning and teaching (Matthews, 2016). These student initiatives have now significantly contributed to improvement of campuses. What students perform in these roles is finally revealing their skills. According to Sims et al. (2016), the fact that several student-university partnerships take place in a single academic year demonstrates how commonplace improvement through student engagement is in the field.

More generally, student engagement in co-creation, which has been promoted and defined by Cook-Sather et al. (2014), acknowledges that the student role in change initiatives cannot always be shared evenly in a 50/50 collaboration between faculty and students. Partnership provides a great alternative to the language of consumerism as part of the empowering of students through student engagement possibilities (National Union of Students [NUS], 2012). Making students change agents offers them a sense of ownership in their higher education community (Matthews et al., 2018).

Student voice

Making sure have the chance to share their educational experiences is not a novel concept; pre-tertiary education academics have studied pupil voice, student voice, and the learner voice for many decades, beginning with early childhood and continuing through secondary school (Carey, 2012; Fielding, 2004). Student voice can be characterized in two ways. One of them is feedback collected from students via any forum such as face-to-face interactions, questionnaires, online platforms or other methods of obtaining feedback. The other way in defining student voice is

conservations among administrators, faculty and students concerning academic matters. Thus, it can be said that student voice is the cornerstone of any increased level of student engagement in student growth and institutional development. In order to guarantee that staff and students can communicate honestly about education without being divided, Fletcher (2017) explains important concepts. In Higher education institutions, surveys have dramatically increased both locally and nationally. These surveys of student engagement and student satisfaction being common in many countries such as National Student Survey by the United Kingdom, Australian Survey of Student Engagement, and National Survey of Student Engagement have been used to hear student voice in addition to course evaluation forms applied at the end of the semester. Although surveys are immensely effective in gathering data from a large number of students, they have drawn heavy criticism for their low reliability, severe research restrictions, and excessive usage (Porter et al., 2004). Too many surveys have reportedly led to survey fatigue in some educational institutions. As a result, this approach has prompted Higher education institutions and students' unions to adopt more innovative methods for incorporating student voice. Additional accessible opportunities for students to voice their opinions have been included in some institutions like forums for student voice, satisfaction applications, and anonymous idea journals. These formats are frequently shorter, more conversation-starting or engaging, and give more immediate feedback (Muijs, 2012).

Students taking responsibility

Student participation in programs that put the students in leadership roles, whether in official roles as part of university business or as part of the peer support services of university, has also been a feature of student engagement practices. In Europe, students are now represented equally in national, regional, and course-level quality-assurance committees by the national quality organizations like the European Association for Quality Assurance (EAQA, 2005). The establishment of quality assurance mechanisms and the opportunity for students to participate in higher education evaluation are made possible by quality-assurance agencies. These organizations demand compliance from schools to support the effective adoption of student reviewers, who serve as full and equal panel members and conduct quality reviews of local course materials and documentation (Owen, 2013). At the Universities of Lincoln

and Chester, students have served on interview panels for prospective hires, and at Lingnan University in Hong Kong and University College London, students have conducted teaching observations (Marie & Azuma, 2018). In addition to these formal roles, higher education students have taken on roles in official university processes as well as duties for assisting other students through mentorship, coaching, and support, which are examples of peer services. Active student participation or student agency are terms that are frequently used to describe student engagement positions where students assume some responsibility for others or for procedures (Keenan, 2014). University-wide initiatives known as peer-assisted learning are not generally supported by university members, but they facilitate development sessions and provide individualized guidance throughout higher education, they help to engaging students in their academic development during transition to higher education (Green, 2011).

Student representation

Many institutions, including national higher education associations, have promoted and included student representation at program and larger institutional levels to guarantee that it may be formally used in larger higher education operations in order to establish student voice practice at Higher education institutions (Bols, 2017). In certain countries, like New Zealand and the United Kingdom, this aspect of student engagement practice is a given. However, in other countries, initiatives like the Student Voice Project: Australia (2019) still seek to improve it. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of the United Kingdom lays a strong focus on student engagement on higher education committees and in decision-making processes, and during external evaluations, asks the institutions to provide proof of how their students are engaged in important academic and institutional matters (Quality Assurance Agency [QAA], 2012). In the United Kingdom, where student representation is widely practiced, there are normally two student representatives appointed to three or four course-level committees annually, along with other informal responsibilities as representatives of their cohorts and involvement in their student union. These programs supported by institutional policies are frequently run by the students' union, which provides an institutional-wide identity for a student engagement activity, including all academic disciplines. Then, the students appoint the elected faculty or institutional executives by themselves as the president of the students' union to higher

university committees. This supports the student voice to become more professional, or upskill, through training, so that students feel prepared to engage in the chances for educational growth as well as sufficiently skilled to join these frequently unfamiliar environments with their complicated jargon-filled businesses. University members have also had to adjust, allowing for more liberal discussions about education with their students and opening up their own practices to possibly unfavorable critiques. The institutional culture will change to the point where a student will be required at every meeting as this student engagement practice becomes a norm for the institution. A concrete illustration of how students and faculty seek to engage in new settings outside of academic work or services is demonstrated through student representation (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020).

2.3.6. Literature Review on Student Engagement Studies in Higher Education of Türkiye

It is seen that there are scale adaptation studies and scale development studies in recent years in order to determine student engagement levels in higher education in Türkiye. When these studies are examined, the studies of Günüç and Kuzu (2014), Uğur and Akın (2015), Gün et al. (2019), Eliüşük-Bülbül and Yılmaz-Özelçi (2018), Yıldırım et al. (2016), Kürtül et al. (2021), Bilirkoca et al. (2022) take attention in the scope of student engagement scales in higher education of Türkiye. When these scales and their resulting dimensions are examined, the followings are obtained.

Günüç and Kuzu (2014) developed the Student Engagement Scale for measuring student engagement of university students. The research presented in the related literature were carefully reviewed throughout the development of the item pool for the scale. The 41 items were created based on the findings of the associated studies. When looked the six factors of the student engagement according to this scale, they are seen as sense of belonging, cognitive engagement, peer relationships, relationships with the faculty, behavioral engagement and campus engagement.

Uğur and Akın (2015) adapted the Student Engagement Scale developed by Mazer (2013) to higher education of Türkiye. The research was conducted on 257 university students. In the confirmatory factor analysis, the model consisting of 13 items and four

sub-dimensions which are active listening, verbal participation, thinking about the course content, working outside the classroom was found to fit well.

The University Student Engagement Inventory created by Maroco et al. (2016) was translated into Turkish culture by Gün et al. (2019). In order to do this, data were gathered from 246 undergraduate students during the spring semester of the 2016–2017 academic year. This five-point Likert-scale including 15 items measures three factors, namely, behavioral engagement, affective engagement, and cognitive engagement.

Student Engagement in Schools Scale developed by Veiga (2016) adapted to Turkish by Eliüşük-Bülbül and Yılmaz-Özelçi (2018). To adapt this scale, they collected the data from 52 university students studying at the department of English language and literature. This five points Likert-scale including 13 items tries to assess four sub-dimensions of student engagement, which are cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, affective engagement and personal agency.

The Student Engagement Scale developed by Mazer (2012) was adapted to higher education of Türkiye by Yıldırım et al. (2016). This scale, which aims to measure the engagement of university students, consists of 13 items and 4 dimensions. These dimensions consist of silent behaviors in the classroom, verbal behaviors in the classroom, thinking about the course content, and behaviors out of the classroom.

The Student Engagement Scale was adapted to higher education context in Türkiye by Kürtül et al. (2021). They benefited from two different versions of student engagement scale which are American-Canadian version and Australian-New Zealander version in the adaptation process of the scale. Two data sets totaling 526 university students who were enrolled in a public institution in Türkiye were used during the adaption process. According to this scale, there are different seven factors which are different from origin version. These factors are academic challenge, active learning, student-lecturer interactions, enriching interactions, supportive learning, work integrated learning and extensive study, activity and expertise.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2019) was adapted to higher education of Türkiye by Bilirkoca and her colleagues (2022). The results of the

collected data from 450 teacher candidates proved that NSSE can assess student engagement in higher education as a ten-dimensional structure. These factors can be listed like that: high level learning, reflective learning, learning strategies, numerical reasoning, collaborative learning, discussions with different people, student-faculty interaction, effective teaching practices, quality of interactions, supportive environment.

The relationship between student engagement and other variables in higher education of Türkiye has also been the focus of the study. Most of the studies on student engagement in the literature have focused on the relationship between academic achievement (Bilir, 2020; Çapa-Aydın et al., 2015; Günüç, 2014, Karabıyık, 2019), quality of education (Uludağ, 2021a), student satisfaction (Boyacı et al., 2018; Çalışkan, 2023), wellbeing (Yılmaz-Özelçi & Eliüşük-Bülbül, 2018) educational technologies (Delialioğlu, 2012; Günüç, 2013), organizational culture and climate (Borhan & Emil, 2021; Günüç et al., 2022), and trust (Özer et al., 2018; Deveci-Şirin et al., 2022). Brief notes on the results of these studies conducted in Türkiye are presented below.

In the scope of the relationship between student achievement and student engagement, Çapa-Aydın and her colleagues (2015) tested the predictors of student engagement in university life and perceived English proficiency levels on students' GPA and academic achievements. It reveals that relationships with the faculty, relationships with peers, participation in campus activities, and perceived English proficiency are positively related to students' academic achievements Similarly, Günüç (2014) attempted to comprehend the connection between student engagement and student success. The studies found high relationships between students' academic achievement and engagement, as well as between academic success and the aspects of cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, and sense of belonging. Additionally, it was discovered that engagement in class—a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional activities—predicted academic success and contributed 10% to its explanation. In addition, Karabıyık (2019) also examined the relationship between student engagement and student achievement. The results from the midterm exams were used to gauge students' proficiency in English. The results of the midterm exams correlated favorably with all forms of student engagement.

Students are one of the most essential stakeholders in quality assurance studies in higher education. One of the system's critical elements is ensuring that students obtain the desired qualifications. In the study conducted by Uludağ (2021a), the importance of student engagement in quality assurance studies, the structure and activities of the Higher Education Quality Board Student Commission and how students can take part in quality assurance studies are also presented. According to Uludağ (2021b), awareness studies should be conducted regarding the necessity and importance of student engagement in terms of students and the system. In addition, student engagement should be encouraged by higher education institutions. Moreover, the sustainability of all studies regarding students' having a say in national and international quality assurance studies should be ensured. The fact that these studies are a natural part of the quality assurance processes should be adopted by both higher education institutions, students and all stakeholders, contributing to the improvement of the processes and their important role in increasing the visibility and competitiveness of Turkish higher education institutions.

Regarding student satisfaction, Boyacı et al. (2018) analyzed the factors that weaken student engagement. The study focused on the engagement of engineering students. The participants consisted of 13 students who had previously left these universities for various reasons and transferred to a new university while they were studying in the engineering departments of different universities. In the light of the data obtained, three themes emerged. They are student-level factors, institution-level factors and environmental factors, which weaken student engagement. When compared with the western literature, it can be said that various factors related to educational expectations, program features, faculty-student interaction and external environment (city characteristics) differ in the context of Türkiye. Similarly, Çalışkan (2023) also investigated the relationship between student satisfaction and student engagement in higher education institutions. According to the findings of the study, emotionally involved students are extremely satisfied with social and cultural activities, research and development activities, educational procedures and practices, and educational environment and resources. Students with strong academic engagement, on the other hand, are more satisfied with social and cultural events, as well as educational methods and practices. Students with strong social engagement reported being satisfied with social and cultural activities, educational procedures and practices, and educational

environment and resources. Finally, behavioral engagement was found to be associated only with satisfaction with research and development activities.

In terms of wellbeing, Yılmaz-Özelçi and Eliüşük-Bülbül (2018) conducted research on student engagement of university students. As a result of the analyses, a significant relationship was found between the cognitive, behavioral, affective and personal agency dimensions of the engagement scale with positive and negative emotions. Multiple regression analysis for behavioral and affective dimensions of student engagement shows that wellbeing does not contribute significantly to the affective dimension of engagement. In the study, it was seen that wellbeing predicted the cognitive engagement and student agency significantly. When the research findings are evaluated in general, it is possible to talk about a relationship between wellbeing and student engagement.

Concerning educational technologies, Delialioğlu (2012) tried to explore the effects of integrating various teaching styles with technology on student engagement. In the first eight weeks of the semester, a mixed learning environment was built and implemented, and in the second eight weeks, a problem-based blended learning environment was established and executed in the context of the course. As a result, indicators of student engagement such as active learning and time on task were much greater in the problem-based blended learning. There was no difference between the two designs in terms of course satisfaction, interactivity, and academic difficulty level. In addition, Günüç (2013) aims to determine the role of the educational technologies in student engagement. As a result, the factors affecting student engagement are discussed under the components of campus and course engagement. In addition, for many students, the use of technology in the course was not considered necessary to increase their engagement. However, it was concluded that effective technology integration not only contributes to student engagement, but also is one of the important ways to increase student engagement. As a result of all the findings, the relations between student engagement and technology use were tried to be explained with the Campus-Course-Technology Theory developed as a result of the study.

In the scope of organizational culture, Borhan and Emil (2020) conducted research on the relationship between student engagement and three types of organizational culture.

These are the adhocratic-clan, market, and hierarchical types. The findings revealed a substantial relationship between student engagement and these three organizational culture types. Furthermore, whereas market culture and adhocratic-clan culture were shown to be strongly predictive of student engagement, the type of hierarchical culture was not. Moreover, Günüç et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between student engagement and campus atmosphere. A significant relationship between student engagement and the campus atmosphere of the university was discovered. On the other hand, in this study, it is underlined that campus environment is not the only element that influences student engagement. As a result, it is suggested that student engagement should be considered from a comprehensive standpoint.

Regarding trust, Özer et al. (2018) analyzed the relationship between engagement of university students in the course and the level of trust in the instructors. Regression analysis was conducted to determine whether students' trust in instructors significantly predicted their engagement in the course. It has been determined that students' trust in their instructors is a significant predictor of their engagement in the course and explains approximately 16% of the total variance in the level of engagement. This result means that when students trust their instructors, they engage more in the course and thus they learn better. Similarly, Deveci-Şirin et al. (2022) showed the positive relationship between the trust in the instructors and student engagement. Additionally, the study demonstrates that student trust in the instructor has a stronger impact on student engagement than it does on their participation in the course.

Öz (2019) examined engagement of university students and the factors predicting student engagement in Anadolu University by the help of quantitative methods. According to the findings obtained from the analyzes, the individual characteristics that contributed positively and significantly to engagement and its sub-dimensions were generally gender (female), faculty (Faculty of Education) and the average time allocated to weekly academic studies. According to the findings obtained from the multiple and binary logistic regression analyzes, the model established with the sub-dimensions of engagement explained student achievement with the probability of being satisfied with the university experience and the probability of participating in graduate education after undergraduate education. In the models where individual

characteristics were controlled, the percentage of explanation of student engagement increased.

Bilir (2020) analyzed the level of student engagement in higher education at a national level and to examine its relationship with the desire to continue university education and academic success. It was found that university students' scores on the higher education student engagement scale are at a moderate level. These scores showed significant differences based on personal and university experience-related characteristics. The study concluded that student engagement statistically significantly predicted both academic success and the intention to continue attending university.

The Türkiye University Satisfaction Survey (TÜMA) was first conducted in 2016 by Karadağ and Yücel (2024), the founders of the University Research Laboratory. The main purpose of TÜMA is to determine the level of satisfaction of the university students in Türkiye to rank the universities according to the satisfaction levels of the students. TÜMA aims to provide perspective on experiences of university students. The data try to provide an idea of how satisfactory universities are in meeting students' needs. While students' experiences are an important indicator of student satisfaction, satisfaction provides only a partial picture of whether the educational experience is satisfactory or not.

"Student Satisfaction Scale" used to collect data in all TÜMA research between 2016-2024. The Student Satisfaction Scale was developed for students to evaluate their university in six dimensions. The scale consists of 60 items in a 10-point Likert format. The six dimensions that make up the scale are (i) satisfaction of learning experience, (ii) satisfaction of campus life, (iii) academic support and interest, (iv) satisfaction with the administration and operation of the institution, (v) richness of learning opportunities and resources, and (vi) personal development and career support. The average of each university in six dimensions and total average have been calculated. Then, the universities in Türkiye have been classified in the range of 6 points. The levels are named A+, A, B, C, D, and FF from highest to lowest scores in terms of student satisfaction (Karadağ & Yücel, 2024).

When examined the results of TÜMA between 2016-2024, the average level of satisfaction of the students has been realized at the "D" level, in all years. The most

problematic dimension in the eyes of students is satisfaction with the administration and operation of the institution, in all years. When the results of the research are analyzed together, it is seen that universities with higher levels of student satisfaction are gradually decreasing in percentage in general. The samples and summary satisfaction levels results by years are presented below.

Table 3. *The number of universities according to student satisfaction levels by years*

Level	2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016	
	N	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***
A+	7	3,5	7	3,5	8	4,02	7	3,5	11	5,7	14	7,4	17	9,9	22	13,4	19	10,9
A	12	6,0	12	6,0	14	7,04	10	5,1	15	7,8	17	9,0	22	12,8	23	14,0	24	13,8
B	18	9,0	16	8,0	19	9,55	15	7,6	33	17,2	35	18,6	30	17,4	30	18,3	29	16,7
C	24	12,0	31	15,5	36	18,09	21	10,6	31	16,1	23	12,2	23	13,4	19	11,6	22	12,6
D	43	21,5	40	20,0	36	18,09	37	18,7	36	18,8	41	21,8	33	19,2	30	18,3	36	20,7
FF	96	48,0	94	47,0	86	43,22	108	54,5	66	34,4	58	30,9	47	27,3	40	24,4	44	25,3
Total	200		200		199		198		192		188		172		164		174	

Resource: Karadağ & Yücel (2016-2024)

The studies conducted by Karadağ and Yücel (2016-2024) reveal the varying performance of Turkish universities in terms of student satisfaction and educational quality over the years. The findings and implications are summarized below:

Overall Performance and A+ Level: The studies indicate that only a small number of universities have met student expectations at the "A+" level each year. While 19 universities achieved this level in 2016, this number dropped to 7 in 2024. This trend suggests that high standards of satisfaction and excellence are becoming increasingly challenging to meet.

FF Level and Educational Quality: The number of universities at the "FF" level has fluctuated over the years. For example, the number increased from 44 in 2016 to 96 in 2024, indicating a significant decline in educational quality and student satisfaction for these institutions.

State vs. Foundation Universities: The performance gap between state and foundation universities has varied over the years. For instance, in 2020, foundation universities

performed better at the "A+" level compared to state universities. However, at the "FF" level, foundation universities were more prominently represented.

Pandemic Impact: The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to a notable decline in overall satisfaction and performance scores. This reflects the adverse impact of the pandemic on the educational environment.

Overall, Karadağ and Yücel's studies (2016-2024) highlight that the quality of education and student satisfaction among Turkish universities have shown variability over time, with some universities consistently performing well while others have experienced declines in quality.

The studies to ensure quality assurance in higher education in Türkiye are carried out by the Higher Education Quality Board (YÖKAK). In this part, the quality assurance system in Turkish higher education, the structure of YÖKAK under the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and its fields of activity are included. Students are one of the most essential stakeholders in quality assurance studies in higher education. Therefore, ensuring that university students reach the targeted qualifications is one of the important issues of the system.

The main purpose of YÖKAK is to be a mirror to the quality assurance systems, teaching and learning practices, research and development activities, administrative structures and social contribution mechanisms of higher education institutions in terms of quality assurance. In other words, it is to contribute to the increase of the quality of the national higher education system. For this purpose, YÖKAK tries to ensure that the strengths of the institutions are sustainable and the aspects that are open to development are improved. In addition, it aims to raise qualified human resources equipped with the skills required by development and collaborative processes (Uludağ et al., 2021a; YÖKAK, 2023b). YÖKAK, which attaches great importance to student engagement in quality assurance processes in higher education, also supports efforts to spread this culture among students.

YÖKAK Student Commission was established by the decision of the Board on October 1, 2019, in order to improve the engagement of higher education students in the quality assurance system, to propagate the quality culture in the area of higher

education, to internalize quality assurance procedures and to conduct out research at national and worldwide levels. The main duties of the Student Commission are as follows (YÖKAK, 2023b):

1) To conduct research to guarantee that students internalize and spread quality culture in higher education.,
2) To promote student participation in quality assurance procedures in higher education
3) To plan the activities to be carried out during the academic year and to present them to the Board for discussion at its meeting in November,
4) To participate in national and international quality studies and to carry out activities that will ensure the participation of other students within the framework of the knowledge of the Chairman of the Board and the planning of the Chairman of the Commission and the Coordinator,
5) To suggest the students, who will take part in the evaluation programs carried out by the Board, to the Institutional External Evaluation and Accreditation Commission,
6) To create an archive of the works carried out and to present them to the Board at the end of the year,
7) To prepare an activity report on the activities carried out by the Commission during the relevant year and present it to the Board at the end of the year and contribute to the writing of the relevant part of the Status Report.

It is considered important to examine the construct of student engagement in terms of higher education institutions since engagement of university students may affect their achievement levels, wellbeing in their future jobs, trust in their instructors, perceived academic culture and climate, their satisfaction levels, integration with educational technologies, and etc. Student engagement is a widely discussed topic in the context of universities. According to educational institutions and higher education researchers, student engagement is seen as an important prerequisite for increasing student success and developing student experience, while it is considered as an indicator of institutional and individual success according to policy makers. This situation reveals the importance of student engagement for universities.

2.3.7. Summary of the Literature Review on Student Engagement Studies in Higher Education

As can be understood from this chapter, there are numerous factors studied in relation to student engagement in higher education. Below is a summary table that pairs these factors with their corresponding dimensions within the scope of student engagement research in higher education.

Table 4. *The factors researched in the literature on the concept of student engagement in higher education*

Factors	**Related Studies**
Faculty	Bryson, 2014; Bryson, 2015; Cebrián et al., 2015; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Ma et al., 2015; Marie et al., 2016; Öz, 2019; Özer, 2018; Umbach &Wawrzynski, 2005
Campus opportunities	Angus Busby, 2011; Bowman et al., 2015; Günüç et al., 2022; LaNasa et al., 2007
Extracurricular activities	Arranz et al., 2017; Guilmette et al., 2019; Kuh, 1995; Lounsbury et al., 2008; Stevenson & Clegg, 2012
Student agency	Ashwin, 2009; Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013
Student retention	Aypay et al., 2012
Social integration	Aypay & Demirhan, 2009; Cox, 2013; Mannan, 2007;
Well-being	Ballard et al., 2020; Yılmaz-Özelçi & Eliüşük-Bülbül, 2018
Student governance	Banaszak, 2015; Carey, 2012; Carey, 2013; Healey et al., 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Matthews et al., 2018
Care	Barnacle & Dall'Alba, 2017
Online learning	Bolliger & Halupa, 2018; Borup ey al, 2020; Bouta et al., 2012; Casimiro, 2015; Chen et al., 2008; D'Errico et al., 2016; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008; Salas-Pilco et al., 2022; Türk, 2022
Educational technology	Bond et al., 2020; Delialioğlu, 2012; Günüç, 2013; Howard et al., 2016; Selwyn, 2016
Culture	Borhan & Emil, 2021; Brennan et al., 2004
Student achievement	Bilir, 2020; Bowden et al., 2019; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Çapa-Aydın et al., 2015; Fagioli et al., 2015; Günüç, 2014; Heng, 2014; Kahu & Nelson, 2019; Karabıyık, 2019; Öz, 2019; Peck, 2017a
Part-time work	Boyacı et al., 2018; Robb, 2004
Student satisfaction	Çalışkan, 2023; Karadağ &Yücel, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024; LaNasa et al., 2017; Peck, 2017a; Zhao et al., 2015

Student voice	Fletcher, 2017; Grebennikov & Shah, 2013; Morris, 2018
Intellectual development	Graham & Donaldson, 1999
Internationalization	Green, 2018; Zhao et al., 2005
Diversity	Gurin, 2002; Reay et al., 2005
Student-centered learning	Hoidn, 2020; Hu & Kuh, 2001; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Klemenčič, 2020; Klemenčič & Hoidn, 2020; Kuh, 2001
Psychological support / burnout	Hoyne, 2013; Schaufeli et al., 2002
Institutional characteristics	Hu & Kuh, 2002; Porter, 2006
Co-curricular experiences	Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bovill, 2021; Peck, 2017b; Yebei, 2011
Quality assurance	Isaeve et al., 2020; Krause, 2012; Tanaka, 2019; Uludağ, 2021a, YÖKAK, 2023b
Motivation	Järvelä & Renninger, 2014; Skinner et al., 2008;
Stress	Kadiyono & Liyani, 2019
Social media	Junco et al., 2011
Family	Kenny & Donaldson, 1991
Student identity	Solomonides & Reid, 2009
First-year experience	Peck, 2017a; Pike, 1999; Pike & Kuh, 2005b; Yorke, 2006; Zepke, 2013
Belonging	Thomas, 2012
Gender	Öz, 2019; Stevenson & Clegg, 2012; Tison et al., 2009
Psychometric properties	Uğur & Akın, 2015
Active citizenship	Zepke, 2018

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and its details embedded in this study. It includes the headings of the research approach the overall research design of the study with research question; data collection procedures and tools; and data analysis. In addition, this chapter offers a general description of four cases as well as the trustworthiness of the study. Lastly, the chapter presents a discussion of the study's limitations.

3.1. Research Approach

In addition to the studies in which the positivist approach is dominant, it is seen that interpretive paradigms have started to dominate especially in social sciences to explain the phenomena and reveal the understandings for individuals. Rather than identifying and predicting cause and effect with the positivist approach, or describing some distribution of traits within the community, the descriptive approach may be concerned with stating what a phenomenon means to the participants (Cohen, et al., 2011). The emergence of alternative approaches to the positivist approach, especially in social sciences, can be explained like that. A positivist orientation believes that reality lies outside and is observable, fixed, measurable. The knowledge gained through this reality effort is called scientific and includes the establishment of some basic laws. This strict point of view has brought with it the postmodernism approach. Postmodernism emphasizes that knowledge is relative rather than absolute, but it is also possible to distinguish between plausible and implausible when using empirical evidence (Patton, 2002). With this research approach, in the past three decades, qualitative research has formed its own literature base and terminology and has become a special field of study, with conferences organized by interest groups (Merriam, 2009).

Interpretive research, where qualitative research often takes place, assumes that reality is socially constructed. In other words, there is no single observable reality. Instead, there are many different interpretations of facts or of a single phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2009) supports the idea that individuals put subjective meanings on their experiences while trying to understand the world in which they live and work. It is stated that people create these subjective meanings through interactions with other individuals, history and cultural norms that are effective in the lives of individuals.

One of these qualitative research methods, the case study design was used. A case study is an in-depth description and examination of a limited system. Case study, according to Yin (2014), is empirical research that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life setting, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the environment are unclear. In other words, case study differs from experimentation by consciously separating the phenomenon from its context in that it considers a phenomenon in a real-life context, and from historical studies in that the relevant data providers are available for interview or direct observation of the relevant phenomenon is possible (Yin, 2014).

An important characteristic of case study research is the limitation of the object of the study, namely the case. The nature of the research problem and the research question to be answered are of great importance in choosing the case study design in this study. Case studies provide the opportunity to investigate a large number of variables and intertwined social units that have potential importance for understanding a phenomenon. Within the scope of this study, four universities, each of which is defined as a case, are analyzed in a holistic way on the axis.

3.2. Overall Research Design

The main aim of this study is to reveal the academic, psychological and social engagement of higher education students during their university life. In the scope of this purposes, four state universities in different regions of Türkiye were chosen as case studies and their undergraduate students participated in the study. A semi-structured interview form and screen shots of student pages on their web-sites were used as data collection tools (See appendices A-B). The researcher created an interview form by examining the relevant literature on student engagement of higher

education students in national and international levels. Before the pilot study for the established timetable, expert opinion was sought. After the pilot study to do main study, the approval of the Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University (METU) was obtained in order to maintain the data collection procedure **(**See appendix C**)**. After ethical approval was obtained, a petition was sent to the rectorates of the four relevant universities officially through the rectorate of METU to collect data from all faculties of these universities by adding the ethical approval and interview form. Then, the relevant universities approved this request. Approval letters coming from these four universities have been attached (See appendix D).

Different terms are used for studies in which researchers use more than one case. These case studies are often portrayed with different terms as collective case, cross, multiple, or comparative case studies. The question of how to reach generalization with a single experiment comes to the fore. Experimental study based on a single setting is uncommon in scientific reality; instead, it is based on several trials repeating the same experiment under different situations. Several case studies use the same method (Yin, 2014). The goal of this study is to make analytical generalizations to a cosmos rather than statistical generalizations, that is, to offer propositions to existent theories. Therefore, in this research, a multiple case study was utilized as the design of the research. In studies conducted in this design, it is necessary to collect and analyze data from more than one case. The point where it differs from single case studies is the presence of subunits or subcases. Multiple case studies allow making inferences in terms of certain variables, as they allow cross-comparisons (Merriam, 2009). The reason for dealing with the selected case in multiple case studies is that it belongs to a particular case collection (Stake, 2006). In this study, in order to understand what undergraduate students in newly established universities in Türkiye experience in their university life, more than one university is selected and each one is considered as a case. From this axis, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU), Uşak University (UU), Adıyaman University (ADYU) and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) were selected and examined as four different cases.

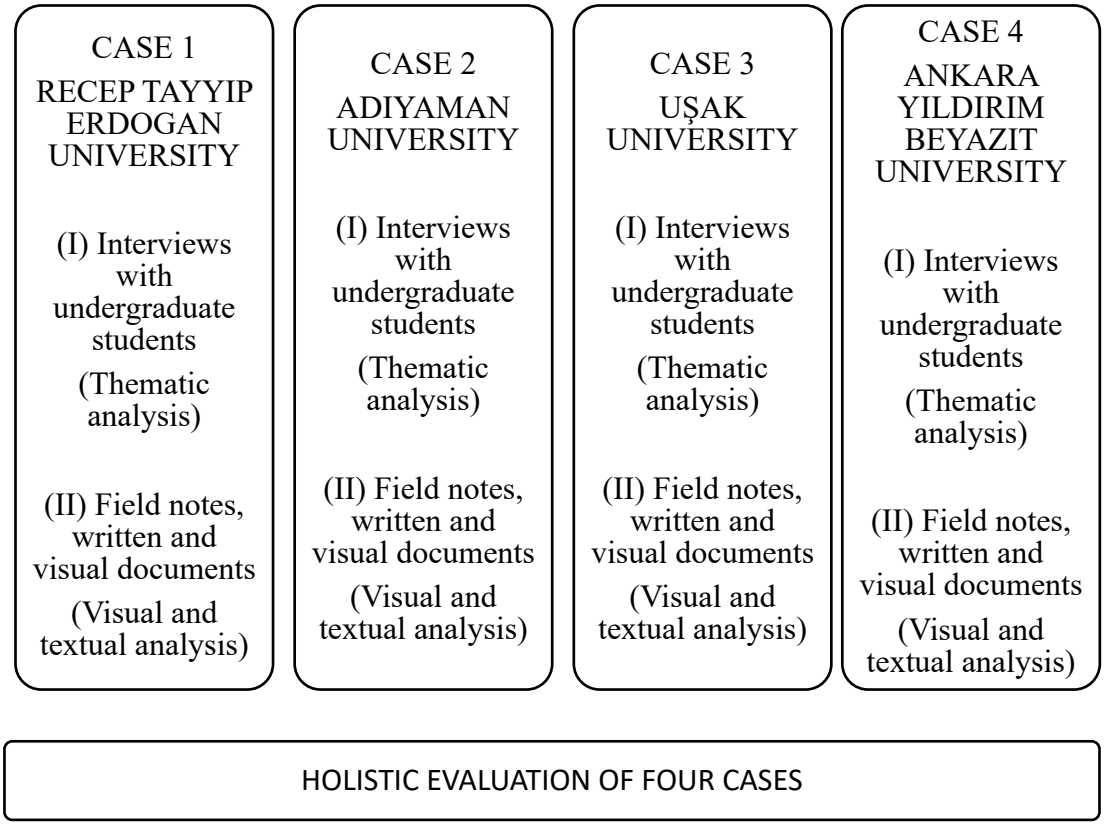
Individual cases have a common feature or cases. Each case in the collection can be put under a common category in terms of certain situations. The more cases there are in multiple case studies, the more variation there will be between cases and the harder

it will be to interpret and discuss for the researcher (Merriam, 2009). When looking at similar or opposite cases from a distance, the findings of a single case can be understood, and it can be justified by determining how, where and, if possible, why it is the way it is (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Including a large number of cases is actually a strategy used to increase the reliability of the study and to create a framework for its findings. After examining the concept of student engagement theoretically and structurally, these four universities were determined as cases in order to understand the experiences of undergraduate students in these newly established universities and to make meaningful inferences by making comparisons. Within the scope of this study, the focus is on the universities that were established in Türkiye with the motto of "one university in each city" launched in 2006. These four universities, which were established with this higher education policy and located in various geographical regions of Türkiye, are discussed in the study with a multiple case study design to understand the academic, psychological and social experiences of the undergraduate students in the newly established universities and to make cross-comparisons.

Looking at the literature, the classification of multiple case studies differs. Two types of multiple case study designs can be mentioned by looking at their general characteristics. The first one is the holistic multiple case study design, in which there is more than one cases and each case is handled and compared holistically. The second type is the embedded multiple case study design, in which each of the multiple cases has its own sub-cases (Yin, 2014). In this study, holistic multiple case study design was utilized. In this study, the four state universities selected in this study constitute the cases of the study, which tries to understand the experiences of the students in the universities established after 2000s on the axis of student engagement. In this study, in which a holistic multiple case study design was used, after each university was handled within itself, later comparisons were made. Finally, a general framework was tried to be presented by considering the findings in these four cases. Because they offer more evidence than a single case and increase the confidence in the conclusions, holistic multiple case study was selected. By the help of this design, it has been tried to reveal how university students perceive the opportunities and challenges in their university life.

According to Yin (2003), in a multiple case holistic design, the researcher attempts to investigate by collecting data independently from related cases within the context of the same study issue using diverse standard instruments. These instances allow the researchers to compare their findings to those of other cases. In this study, the multiple case holistic design was utilized because the researcher followed the same data collection procedure for each case and wanted to compare the findings from each case with one another. The following is a visual representation of the research design:

Figure 1. *Visual Representation of Research Design*



In general, it is emphasized in the literature that multiple case studies are carried out with the desire for external validity and replication (Grünbaum, 2007). One of the debates about the single case studies and multiple case studies is about which one will contribute more to the theoretical framework. In this study, in parallel with Eisenhardt (1991), a multiple case study approach was preferred in the hope that it could contribute more to the existing theories or building new understandings. On the other hand, how the cases are sampled in the case study is another important issue (Eisenhardt, 1989). Since the study does not aim to test hypotheses and is more suitable for the qualitative research tradition, cases were chosen with the non-random sampling

method in this study. In the selection of the cases, care was taken to include cases that support the different perspective that is tried to be brought to the theory as much as possible. The parts related to this point of the study are discussed in detail below.

The existence of multiple case studies and making comparisons constitute the basic logic of the method. The main reason for the development of the method is to reveal the roadmap of theory development based on case studies. Therefore, the process is clearly expressed as steps, activities and causes (Eisenhardt, 1989). According to Eisenhardt (1989), multiple case studies might serve three purposes which are replicating earlier case studies, extending or contributing to the existing theories, and filling the gap in theoretical categories. The multiple case study design is preferred to make supplement the existing student engagement approaches.

Since the development stages of the design, the arguments of Glaser and Strauss (1967) that the developed theory is the result of an in-depth relationship with the empirical material obtained guide the design of the method. In addition to the benefit that a multi-case design makes it possible for the research question to be successfully answered through a compare and contrast procedure, case study designs rely upon multiple sources of evidence such as interviews with participants, direct observations, archival documents of the selected universities, student pages of the selected universities' official website. Because of that the related theoretical framework makes few assumptions about student engagement, this lens is appropriate for this study since the goal of this study is to grasp the nature of student engagement in the universities. It aims to concentrate on the similarities between students' university experiences inside and between instances by employing a number of cases. In addition, comparisons may be made by considering regional, institutional and departmental differences of universities in Türkiye.

Rather than generalizability or theory testing, the major purpose of employing multiple case studies in this study is to conduct a study with a variety of cases to reveal comparable results in cross case analysis and unique outcomes in within case analysis. Both within-case and cross-case analysis are employed in this research. Stake (2006), while describing cross-case analysis, mentions that in multiple case studies, similar and different functions or conditions are studied about cases to better understand the

phenomenon. However, although they have given a common meaning to all these identified cases in holistic way, when each of the selected higher education institutions is evaluated as a separate case, it is also of special importance to find their characteristics and differences.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), some challenges may be encountered in managing case studies that take place in more than one location. Studying with more than one case simultaneously is not recommended due to data mixing and focusing problems. It is stated that after the end of the data collection process in the first case studied in multiple case studies, it would be more effective to continue with the second one. Also, after the first case is closed, the remaining cases progress more easily because the first case study can help focus by defining the parameters of the others. In this study, the cases were arranged to avoid potential problems in collecting data from different situations simultaneously, and each was dealt with at different time intervals. First, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University was studied as a case, then Adıyaman and Uşak University were visited respectively, and the study was carried out. Finally, data were collected from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University as a case and the cases were terminated.

3.3. Research Question

The main research question guided this study is:

> "*In what ways, do university students engage in university life in Turkish universities established after 2000s?*"

The case study is an acceptable design for this study's research issue because it is a methodological technique that comprises an in-depth evaluation of a limited system utilizing numerous data collecting methods to gain systematic information about how it functions (Yin, 2014). A multiple case study design is a strategy in which more than one case or event is explored in depth longitudinally, data is methodically collected, and what happens in the actual world is observed.

3.4. Research Context

Massification movements, which gained momentum in higher education of Türkiye after 2006, and in this direction, the fact that higher education was not an area that

only the limited part of the society can access. This higher education policy has brought along important changes in all higher education systems in Türkiye. As almost every citizen wants to benefit from higher education and social needs and expectations intensify at this point, the field of higher education has experienced a serious expansion in recent years.

It is a matter of curiosity about what students experience and what they expect in these relatively newly established universities. These universities, which were established with a rapid acceleration in various regions of Türkiye. It is a matter of curiosity in terms of higher education policies, what students experience in line with their internal structure and dynamics, as well as the social and cultural factors of the region where they are established.

This study used holistic multiple case study that was conducted in four relatively new established state universities after 2000s in different geographical locations in Türkiye. The research was carried out by using the semi-structured interview form created after the related literature was scanned by the researcher with the undergraduate students at these universities in addition to analyzing student pages on websites of these universities. In this study, the undergraduate students were asked their academic, psychological and social experiences in their university life.

This study aims to expose limitations with quality assurance approaches that, even after 17 years of development, exclude information about student engagement for the universities established after 2006 in Türkiye. In this perspective, especially in these universities established after 2006, it will be extremely important to reveal the existing perceptions of the students in the scope of student engagement and to reveal the expectations of the students from their own universities. Considering the effect of the time factor in the development of universities, the universities established in the same year are selected. In other words, the selection of universities was made among the universities in the first group of universities opened with the motto of “one university in each city". This is done because the time of establishment for improvement is considered in order to make comparisons between cases.

In addition, the universities which were established in different development levels in socio-economic development ranking of provinces for 2017 prepared by State

Planning Organization are taken into consideration. After calculating the development levels of the provinces, State Planning Organization divided them into 6 levels. Looking at these development levels, Ankara is at the 1st level, Uşak is at the 2nd level, Rize is at the 3rd level and Adıyaman is at the 6th level. Considering different development levels of provinces as a criterion, the following universities were selected for these reasons: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Uşak University, Adıyaman University and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University.

Purposeful sampling necessitates the deliberate selection of information-rich cases. One of the key goals of this study is to show the opportunities and challenges that undergraduate students face at universities as a result of the institutional structures and emerging dynamics of higher education institutions. It has taken some time for these emergent dynamics to emerge. Although there are many universities opened with the rapid increase in higher education institutions in Türkiye, in terms of higher education dynamics, the focus has been on universities established right after the launch of the policy of "one university in each city". Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Uşak University and Adıyaman University which constitute three of the four cases of this research, were established in 2006. However, metropolitan city life may be a culturally rich place with several opportunities to enhance the undergraduate students in terms of student growth and self-development. Considering this point, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, the first state university established in metropolitan cities after the aforementioned higher education policy in 2006, was determined as a case and the possible role of developed cities in student engagement was tried to be understood.

The documents acquired via web-sites of these universities identified as cases were utilized to examine the data in addition to interviews conducted with undergraduate students. These four higher education institutions were analyzed by the help of strategic plans, annual activity plans and reports, brochures, the shared statistics for the university and other forms of publications. The Table 5 contains a summary of quantitative data collected via the selected university websites and the website of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE, 2024).

Table 5. *Descriptive information of the selected four universities established after 2000s in this case study*

	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University	**Adıyaman University**	**Uşak University**	**Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University**
Establishment Year	2006	2006	2006	2010
Slogan	The university that produces knowledge and value	The university where the sun rises	The new generation university in the light of mind and science	Knowledge, will, courage and speed
# of native undergraduate students	10.958	9.699	17.113	14.968
# of associate degree students	4.495	6.911	9.459	2.631
# of graduate students	1.412	622	1.152	4.733
# of academic personnel	1.265	958	869	1.413
# of international academic personnel	5	9	6	26
# of faculties	15	14	14	13
# of graduate schools	1	1	1	5
# of conservatories	-	1	-	1
# of vocational schools	6	6	11	4
# of associate schools	3	1	1	1
# of associate degree programs	37	43	62	21
# of undergraduate programs	47	39	69	50
# of master programs	50	43	66	145
# of doctorate programs	21	8	26	61
# of campuses	11	4	6	9

# of international students (undergraduate & graduate)	470	442	2.336	2.483
# of official student clubs	90	43	84	75
# of sport centers	15	9	10	13
# of sports teams	9	11	20	8

Source: Statistics on the websites of CoHE (yokatlas.yok.gov.tr) and four state universities, annual activity reports of these four state universities

3.4.1. Case 1: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU)

The university, which was founded on March 17, 2006, and started off with the name Rize University with the slogan of "the university that produces knowledge and value", was later renamed Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University with the official gazette on April 11, 2012. Although the city of Rize accessed to its university in 2006, higher education history of this city dates back to the 1990s. The university gained its own identity by transferring the Faculties of Science and Literature, Maritime, Theology, Education, and Fındıklı Vocational Schools, Rize Vocational Schools, which were established under Karadeniz Technical University in the city of Rize, and with the opening of new faculties.

The adventure of higher education in Rize started with the establishment of Faculty of Theology and Faculty of Aquaculture in 1992, Fındıklı Vocational School in 1996 and Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1997, affiliated to Karadeniz Technical University. In 2003, Ardeşen Vocational School and Health Services Vocational School were established under the roof of Karadeniz Technical University. In 2006, Rize University was established within the framework of the motto of establishing a university in each city. Rize University gained its own institutional identity on 17 March 2006 with the law numbered 5467. Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Aquaculture, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Education, School of Health, Rize Vocational School, Fındıklı Vocational School, Ardeşen Vocational School, Health Services Vocational School which were previously affiliated to Karadeniz Technical University, and the newly established Faculty of Medicine in Rize, Institute

of Social Sciences, Institute of Science and Health Sciences started to operate under Rize University. The name of Rize University was changed to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University with the law numbered 6287 on primary education and education and some laws, published in the Official Gazette dated April 11, 2012 and numbered 28261, upon the proposal of the senate and the decision of the Council of Ministers. In addition, RETU can be considered as a different case since, in the advertisement brochures on the university's website, it is stated that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University has the title of the state university that offers the most scholarships to its students among all state universities in Türkiye.

3.4.1.1. Academic Units of RTEU

As of today, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University is a university with its main campus in the center of Rize, and a unit in the districts of İyidere, Derepazarı, Güneysu, Çayeli, Pazar, Ardeşen and Fındıklı. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University has 15 faculties. 7 of these faculties which are Faculty of Sport Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Aquaculture, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Faculty of Theology are located in main campus named Zihni Derin Campus. Three health-based faculties, which are Faculty of Dentistry, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Pharmacy and Faculty of Health Sciences are located on a separate campus, close to the main campus, next to the university hospital. The other universities are Faculty of Education in Çayeli, Faculty of Agriculture in Pazar, Faculty of Maritime in Derepazarı, Faculty of Tourism in Ardeşen. In addition to six vocational schools, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University has School of Applied Sciences, School of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and School of Foreign Languages.

In addition, there are research and application centers established in various fields within the university. These fields can be listed like that: family and women's problems, plant and soil, tea and tea products, experimental animals, electromagnetic, landslide studies, climate change and environmental problems, Black Sea strategic, career development, blueberry, central research laboratory, measurement and evaluation, guidance and psychological counseling, health, continuing education, fisheries, Turkish teaching, and distance education.

3.4.1.2. Mission and Vision Statements of RTEU

When looked at strategic plan of RTEU launched in 2019, it is seen that mission is to train qualified individuals who internalize national and moral values; to provide quality health service; to carry out research and social activities in global standards; to contribute to social, cultural, economic and scientific development of the region and the country through human-oriented education activities. The vision statement of RTEU is to become a respected university which is competitive in science and technology, providing education in global level, preferred by students both in national and international arena, and known for its unique research in the fields of health and engineering.

3.4.1.3. Education and Instruction Policies of RTEU

The information in this part has been obtained from the policies section of the university's official website. RTEU states that within the scope of university education and instruction activities, they are trying to establish an objective, transparent and effective evaluation system that prepares the program and course contents including the opinions of internal and external stakeholders, and to ensure integrity between program qualifications and course learning outcomes. In this context, it is underlined that there is a policy to increase the vocational knowledge and skills of students by developing cooperation between the public, private sector and industry in order to increase internship and practice opportunities.

RTEU states that they have policies aimed at providing education and teaching services at international standards by developing the competencies of instructors and carrying out accreditation studies in all programs in order to implement the education model that supports active learning. RTEU underlines that they are trying to contribute to the social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological development of the region, the country and the whole humanity by continuing the research activities in which the active participation of the students is ensured at international standards. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of providing rich library services by providing electronic and printed information resources that support education and research activities to students, instructors and researchers.

When looked at the output objectives of the university from the point of view of students, it is stated that it is progressing under the aim of raising qualified, entrepreneurial individuals who question, research, learn, produce value by processing information, have application skills, comply with the expectations of the labor market, by providing education and teaching services at international standards with a student-centered teaching approach.

3.4.1.4. Social Services of RTEU

The details in this part have been obtained from the website of the university. Nutrition services of our university are provided in the form of service procurement from private companies. The daily menu in 2023 consists of four dishes. The university has one central student cafeteria.

It has been stated that cultural activities are organized in order to evaluate the free time of the students at the university, to ensure that they are guided correctly, and to help them acquire useful habits. According to the information presented on the website by the university, RTEU encourages its students to take part in various artistic and recreational activities so that they can use their free time effectively during their education. There are 90 student clubs established by our university students. In this context, in addition to professional concerts and performances, cultural and social activities are organized by student clubs at the university. Statistics on the quantitative growth of student clubs are shared in the annual reports. While it was seen that there were 79 student clubs operating in various fields in 2017, it is seen that this number reached 90 by 2023. When the list of student clubs is examined, it can be said that they operate in many areas. Some student clubs can be listed like that: Academic Thought, Education and Civilization Society, Oral Health Society, Banking Finance Society, Mountaineering Society, Mathematics Society, Electro Technology Society, Young Kızılay Society, Folk Dance Society, Running and Conditioning Society, Halal and Healthy Living Society, Aklı Kamil Society. In 2021, 32% of university students are members of student clubs according to annual activity report of RTEU. When we look at the sports and cultural activities organized by the student clubs, it is understood that 111 activities were organized by the student societies in 2021.

Printed and visual publications that our students and staff need for their education and research are purchased within the framework of budget possibilities. In addition, donations from various public institutions and organizations and individuals are accepted within the framework of certain rules and the library collection is tried to be developed. The subscribed databases, e-journals, e-books and other library services can be accessed 24 hours a day through the website that has been activated.

In the advertisement brochures on the university's website, it is stated that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University has the title of the state university that offers the most scholarships to its students among all state universities in Türkiye. It is seen that the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation gives success scholarships to students who choose the university. The scholarships are only given on the basis of the rankings of the students from the national university exams. Each of the three types of success scholarships has different conditions. The first one called superior scholarship is 5.000 Turkish liras. It is given to students who are placed in the top 1.000 in Türkiye's general success ranking (except for placement success with additional points) in national university exam and who are placed in any of our university's undergraduate programs. It can be said that this scholarship is used to attract high-level students in national university exam to universities in Türkiye. The second one called success scholarship is 2.000 or 3.000 Turkish liras. Success scholarship is given to students who have any of the success rankings included in the Türkiye general success rankings determined for each undergraduate program by the university (excluding the placement success order with additional points). While this type of scholarship can be given with lower rankings especially in the faculties of science and literature, economics and administrative sciences and vocational schools, it is necessary to achieve higher rankings in the university exam for departments such as dentistry, medicine and law. The distribution of this type of scholarship by determining these different ranking ranges can be explained by the policy of attracting students to the departments with low preference. The last scholarship called preference scholarship is 2.000 Turkish liras. It is given to the first three students who are placed as their first choice in one of the programs of the university's faculties of medicine, engineering and architecture, law and theology.

3.4.1.5. General Look to RTEU with Numbers

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University has 16.865 students, 10.958 of whom are undergraduate students; 4.495 of whom are students in associate degree programs, 1.412 of whom are graduate students. In addition, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University has 470 international students. The number of undergraduate students in the faculties of the university is presented in the table below.

Table 6. *The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of RTEU*

Faculty	**Departments**	**# of the Students**
Faculty of Sport Sciences	Sport Management	368
	Physical Education and Sports	
Faculty of Law	Law	252
Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Computer Engineering	1.012
	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	
	Civil Engineering	
	Mechanical Engineering	
	Architecture	
	Landscape Architecture	
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	Economics	1.208
	Business Administration	
	Finance	
	Political Science and Public Administration	
	International Relations	
Faculty of Theology	Theology	1.838
Faculty of Aquaculture	Aquacultural Engineering	47
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	Biology	1.396
	Physics	
	Chemistry	
	Mathematics	
	History	
	Georgian Literature and Language	
	English Literature and Language	

Faculty of Education	Elementary Science Education	1.517
	Elementary Mathematics Education	
	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	
	Primary Education	
	Social Science Education	
	Turkish Language Education	
Faculty of Medicine	Medicine	729
Faculty of Dentistry	Dentistry	451
Faculty of Health Sciences	Nursing	704
	Social Service	
Faculty of Maritime	Maritime Transportation and Management	447
	Engineering	
	Marine Engineering	
Faculty of Tourism	Tourism Management	185
	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	
Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Sciences	Horticultural Crops	96
	Field Crops	
Faculty of Pharmacy	Pharmacy	-
Total number of undergraduate students		10.958

In the annual report 2021 of RTEU, the occupancy rates of the undergraduate programs are given according to the branch division, and it is seen that 50% of the science programs, 66% of the social science programs and 100% of the health programs are filled.

It is seen that a total of 93 students received various punishments such as warning, reprimand and suspension in the 2021-2022 academic year. Of these, 4 were suspended for one or two academic semesters, 35 students were suspended from one week to one month, and 54 students were reprimanded or suspended. In the university exam held centrally, 387 students, who were in the top 50.000 in 2021, preferred Recep Tayyip Erdogan University.

It is stated that there are 15 sports centers in the university where students can do sports activities. Moreover, the university has volleyball, basketball, football, badminton,

boxing and futsal teams. University sports teams participated in 2 sports competitions in total in 2021. The number of students participating in these sports competitions is 21. The Department of Health, Culture and Sports organized 1406 paid certified courses for students in 2023.

3.4.2. Case 2: Adıyaman University (ADYU)

Adıyaman University (ADYU) was established on March 17, 2006, after the motto of "one university in each city", by combining the schools and faculties of İnönü University, Gaziantep University and Harran University within the provincial borders of Adıyaman under one roof. Adıyaman University has the slogan of "*the university where the sun rises*". Adıyaman Vocational School was established in 1983, School of Health in 1995, and Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1998 within the borders of Adıyaman, affiliated to İnönü University. Similarly, the Faculty of Education in 1987, Gölbaşı Vocational School in 1988, Besni Vocational School established in 1997, and Adıyaman Vocational and Technical Education Faculty in 2003 were established under Gaziantep University, another higher education institution in the region. Kahta Vocational School, which was established in 1997 as a subordinate of Harran University, was combined with the academic units affiliated to Gaziantep University and İnönü University established in Adıyaman and took the name Adıyaman University. Adıyaman University has a total of four campuses, namely the central campus, the Kahta campus, the Besni Ali Erdemoğlu campus and the Gölbaşı campus. Adıyaman University can be considered as a different case as it is a university established with faculties seperated from three different universities.

4.4.2.1. Academic Units of ADYU

As of today, Adıyaman University is a university with its main campus in the center of Adıyaman, and a unit in the districts of Kahta, Besni and Gölbaşı. It includes 14 faculties, one conservatory, one graduate institute, one school of foreign languages, and 6 vocational schools. These faculties are Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Dentistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Faculty of Tourism, Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Faculty of Sports Sciences which are located in main campus.

Except for Vocational Schools of Kahta, Besni and Gölbaşı, Faculties of Agriculture and Architecture, all academic units are located on the central campus. While Faculty of Agriculture is in Kahta, while Faculty of Architecture is in Besni. In addition to the School of Foreign Languages, in the main campus, the vocational schools are Health Services Vocational School, Technical Sciences Vocational School and Sani Konukoğlu Social Sciences Vocational School.

In addition, there are research and application centers established in various fields within the university. These fields can be listed like that: astrophysics, fighting against addiction, history of science and technology, environmental management, experimental animals' production, women's issues, career development, urban culture, central laboratory, social studies, continuing education, technology transfer, Turkish teaching, remote sensing and geographic information systems, and distance education.

3.4.2.2. Mission and Vision Statements of ADYU

The mission of Adıyaman University is expressed as raising individuals who respect human values and contributing to social development by sharing the knowledge to be obtained from research. When looked at the vision of Adıyaman University in its strategic plan, it is to be a university that produces and shares knowledge, is preferred in its region, is barrier-free, environmentally friendly and creates value.

3.4.2.3. Education and Instruction Policies of ADYU

The information in this part has been obtained from the policies section of the university's official website. When analyzed the document of Strategic Planning of Adıyaman University 2021-2025, it is emphasized that the university acts with the vision of being a brand university that aims at quality and continuous improvement in education, research and technology, adopts unhindered accessibility as a lifestyle, is education-oriented, environmentally friendly and known for its entrepreneurial aspect. In this direction, ADYU has stated that it organizes many activities to ensure the physical, social, sportive and cultural development of their students in each academic year and that participation in these activities exceeds the set target. It is stated that by organizing activities within the scope of career development days every year, it is aimed to ensure that students prepare themselves for working life in the best way until

they graduate. Adıyaman University has completed all the necessary infrastructure for education. It offers education and teaching opportunities to their students in modern classrooms with projectors and smart boards. All facilities such as classrooms, laboratories and materials that their students will need during their education are provided by our university.

In addition, in the scope of research and development, it is underlined that academic staff of Adıyaman University are involved in research and development activities with scientific studies and projects. The equipment and materials that they will need during the project and studies are met from the budget of the projects, and other needs are tried to be met within the opportunities of the university. The academic staff provide measurement, analysis and consultancy services on the issues needed by the industry, and the infrastructure necessary for the service has been prepared. It is stated that the students do not lose contact with their universities even after they graduate, and the alumni portal provides support for their careers.

3.4.2.4. Social Services of ADYU

The details in this part have been obtained from the website of the university. Adıyaman University states that it offers many services to its students. It is stated that the university is protected by a private security unit and has a safe environment. It was stated that the dormitories for students are located on the campus and students can have both lunch and dinner in the cafeteria. There are places for shopping, sports and social facilities in the campus. It was underlined that there are student clubs for their students so that they can spend their free time and engage in social and sports activities.

3.4.2.5. General Look to ADYU with Numbers

Adıyaman University has 17.232 students, 9.699 of whom are undergraduate students; 6.911 of whom are students in associate degree programs, 622 of whom are graduate students. In addition, Adıyaman University has 442 international students. The number of undergraduate students in the faculties of the university is presented in the table below.

Table 7. *The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of ADYU*

Faculty	**Departments**	**# of the Students**
Faculty of Sport Sciences	Coaching Education	337
	Physical Education and Sports	
Faculty of Pharmacy	Pharmacy	419
Faculty of Dentistry	Dentistry	437
Faculty of Architecture	Interior Architecture	-
	Architecture	
	Urban and Regional Planning	
Faculty of Engineering	Computer Engineering	569
	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	
	Civil Engineering	
	Mechanical Engineering	
	Environmental Engineering	
	Food Engineering	
	Metallurgical and Materials Engineering	
	Textile Engineering	
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	Economics	805
	Business Administration	
	Political Science and Public Administration	
	Social Services	
Faculty of Islamic Sciences	Philosophy and Religion Sciences	487
	Elementary Religion and Ethics Education	
	Islamic Studies	
	Islamic History and Arts	
State Conservatory	Musicology	107
	Turkish Music	
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	Archaeology	2.044
	Biology	
	Physics	
	Chemistry	
	Mathematics	
	History	

	English Literature and Language	
	Turkish Literature and Language	
	History of Arts	
	Sociology	
	Psychology	
Faculty of Education	Elementary Science Education	2.252
	Elementary Mathematics Education	
	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	
	Special Education	
	Primary Education	
	Early Childhood Education	
	Turkish Language Education	
	Social Sciences Education	
	Arabic Language Education	
Faculty of Medicine	Medicine	967
Faculty of Health Sciences	Nursing	766
	Midwifery	
Faculty of Fine Arts	Painting	142
	Ceramics	
	Traditional Turkish Arts	
Faculty of Tourism	Tourism Management	210
	Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	
	Tour Guiding	
	Recreation	
Faculty of Agriculture	Horticulture	157
	Plant Protection	
	Field Crops	
	Soil Science and Plant Nutrition	
Total number of undergraduate students		9.699

3.4.3. Case 3: Uşak University (UU)

Uşak University is another state university founded with the motto of "one university in every city". Founded in 2006, the university has 14 faculties, 11 vocational schools, a graduate institute and a foreign languages school. In 2006, it was separated from Afyon Kocatepe University with 5 faculties, 6 vocational schools and one health

vocational schools and was founded under the name of Uşak University. When the university was separated from Afyon Kocatepe University, its four faculties consisted of the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Science and Arts, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Faculty of Fine Arts. University buildings (except for the Faculty of Dentistry) are located on the main campus, Bir Eylül Campus. The university has the title of pilot university in the fields of leather, textile and ceramics within the scope of the Regional Development Oriented Mission Differentiation and Specialization Program of CoHE.

3.4.3.1. Academic Units of UU

As of today, Uşak University is a university with its main campus in the center of Uşak, and a unit in the districts of Banaz, Eşme, Karahallı, Sivaslı and Ulubey. It includes 14 faculties, one graduate institute, one school of foreign languages, and 11 vocational schools. These faculties are Faculty of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Communication, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Applied Sciences, and Faculty of Agriculture which are located in main campus except for Faculty of Dentistry.

Except for Vocational Schools of Banaz, Eşme, Karahallı, Sivaslı and Ulubey, other vocational schools, school of foreign languages and one graduate institute are located on the central campus. In addition to the School of Foreign Languages, in the main campus, the vocational schools are Vocational School of Health Sciences, Vocational School of Justice, Vocational School of Civil Aviation, Vocational School of Social Sciences, Vocational School of Technical Sciences, and Vocational School of Distance Education.

In addition, there are research and application centers established in various fields within the university. These fields can be listed like that: civil society studies; leather, textile and ceramics design; historical Uşak carpet-rug; energy, environment and sustainability; oral and dental health; distance education; Islamic studies; Atatürk's

principles and revolution history; European Union research; banking and insurance; scientific and technological analysis; earthquake; industrial hemp; migration studies and politics; Lydia region; women and family; health services education; continuing education; agriculture and nature; Turkish world studies; Turkish teaching.

3.4.3.2. Mission and Vision Statements of UU

The mission of Uşak University is to raise self-confident, well-equipped individuals who are committed to universal values through qualified education and instruction activities, and to lead sustainable development by producing projects in areas of specialization for the development of society and the region. When looked at the vision of Uşak University in its strategic plan, it is to be a university that attaches importance to excellence in education and research, produces knowledge, develops designs in the field of specialization, raises entrepreneurial individuals who shape the future, and leads social development.

3.4.3.3. Education and Instruction Policies of UU

The information in this part has been obtained from the policies section of the university's official website. When analyzed the document of policies of university on the website, Uşak University states that, in order to increase the quality of education, it is aimed to popularize foreign language teaching, encourage and strengthen postgraduate education, ensure the personal development of both students and staff, and provide speed, trust and necessary infrastructure in accessing information.

Uşak University declared that it implemented three basic education policies when unveiling its educational activity techniques. The first is to enhance the quality of the education curriculum and learning outcomes by regularly changing them to reflect current conditions and future demands, with the input of stakeholders. Second, it maintains and grows educational program worldwide accreditation, promotes program variety and multidisciplinary programs, and continually expands international relationships. Finally, it gives students the capacity to acquire, evaluate, and apply information using continually updated techniques, as well as solid vocational training via creative, innovative, dynamic, and inspirational education-learning-research

experiences. With this, it is aimed to create, implement and ensure the continuity of an education system that trains the leaders of the future.

3.4.3.4. Social Services of UU

The details in this part have been obtained from the website of the university. Uşak University states that it offers many services to its students. It is stated that approximately 7000 students are served meals in the university cafeteria located in our Student Life Center on Bir Eylül Campus. In terms of transportation, it takes 10 minutes by public transportation to reach our University's Bir Eylül Campus from Uşak city center. Transportation from the districts is also done by public transportation. In addition, the Student Bazaar, located in Bir Eylül Campus, where nearly twenty businesses operating in different sectors are located, serves our students and staff.

It is underlined that workshops, study groups and choirs are established in painting, photography, handicrafts, music, folk dances, modern dances, theater and similar activities for students to carry out art and cultural studies according to their interests and abilities. In addition, these groups and choirs are encouraged to engage in activities such as concerts, shows, exhibitions and matches within and outside the university.

It has been stated that Türkiye's leading institutions provide scholarship opportunities to students who choose textile engineering as their top 5 choice in the university exam. A scholarship opportunity is provided in the form of minimum wage to the students who rank in the top 20 thousand, 70% of the minimum wage to the students who rank between 20-50 thousand, and 50% of the minimum wage to the students who rank between 50-80 thousand. In addition, the first 15 students with the highest scores who are placed and registered in textile engineering department are given a monthly scholarship by Uşak Organized Industrial Zone for a total of 10 months between September and June for four years. Moreover, scholarship, dormitory, and course opportunities are provided to preparatory and first year female students in the Faculty of Islamic Sciences within the determined quota by the Turkish Religious Foundational Academy.

3.4.3.5. General Look to UU with Numbers

Uşak University has 27.724 students, 17.113 of whom are undergraduate students; 9.459 of whom are students in associate degree programs, 1.152 of whom are graduate students. In addition, Uşak University has 2.336 international students. The number of undergraduate students in the faculties of the university is presented in the table below.

Table 8. *The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of UU*

Faculty	**Departments**	**# of the Students**
Faculty of Education	Computer Education and Instructional Technology	2.174
	Elementary Science Education	
	Elementary Mathematics Education	
	Special Education	
	Early Child Education	
	Primary Education	
	Social Sciences Education	
	Turkish Language Education	
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	Archaeology	4.065
	Western Languages and Literature	
	Modern Turkish Dialects and Literatures	
	Geography	
	Mathematics	
	Molecular Biology and Genetics	
	Psychology	
	Art History	
	Sociology	
	History	
	Turkish Language and Literature	
Faculty of Fine Arts	Traditional Turkish Arts	239
	Graphic Arts	
	Fashion Design	
	Music	

	Painting	
	Ceramics	
	Textile and Fashion Design	
Faculty of Communication	Basic Art Education Journalism	2.530
	Public Relations and Advertising	
	Radio, Cinema and Television	
	New Media and Communication	
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	Economics	1.681
	Business Administration	
	Public Administration	
	Public Finance	
	Political Science and International Relations	
	Social Service	
Faculty of Islamic Sciences	Islamic Studies	1.159
	Basic Islamic Studies	
	Philosophy and Religious Studies	
	Islamic History and Arts	
Faculty of Architecture and Design	Industrial Products Design	306
	Interior Architecture and Environmental Design	
	Architecture	
	Urban and Regional Planning	
Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences	Computer Engineering	998
	Electrical and Electronical Engineering	
	Food Engineering	
	Civil Engineering	
	Chemical Engineering	
	Mining Engineering	
	Mechanical Engineering	
	Materials Science and Nanotechnology	
	Engineering	
	Textile Engineering	
Faculty of Health Sciences	Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation	586
	Nursing	
	Occupational Health and Safety	

Faculty of Sports Sciences	Health Management Coaching Education Physical Education and Sports Recreation Sports Management	984
Faculty of Medicine	Medicine	733
Faculty of Applied Sciences	Finance and Banking Logistics Management Accounting and Finance International Trade	554
Faculty of Agriculture	Horticulture Plant Protection Field Crops Animal Science	552
Faculty of Dentistry	Dentistry	552
Total number of undergraduate students		17.113

3.4.4. Case 4: Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU)

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) was established on July 21, 2010 as a 5th state university of capital city of Türkiye. As Ankara's 5th state university, it started education on October 3, 2011, with 7 faculties, one school of foreign languages, 4 institutes and one conservatory. The faculties that have existed since the establishment of the university are the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Political Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, and Faculty of Health Sciences. As of 2023, there are 13 faculties, one school of foreign languages, one state conservatory, 4 vocational schools, 5 graduate institutes and 27 application and research centers. In addition, the Faculty of Law continues its 30% English education program, which it started as the first among state universities in Türkiye.

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University can be considered as a different case since AYBU states that it is the university with the highest rate of international students among universities in Türkiye with a rate of approximately 11% of international students from 109 countries. In other words, AYBU ranks first among universities in Türkiye in this

ratio, with international undergraduate students (2.483 students from 109 countries) constituting approximately 11% of the total number of undergraduate students.

3.4.4.1. Academic Units of AYBU

As of today, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University is a university with 8 campuses, which are Milli İrade (Etlik), Esenboğa, Cinnah, Bilkent, 15 Temmuz Şehitleri, Ulus, Keçiören, Tuz Gölü and Çubuk campuses. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about the existence of a main campus. It consists of campuses scattered in different parts of the city. It includes 13 faculties, one school of foreign languages, one state conservatory, 4 vocational schools, 5 graduate institutes. These faculties are Faculty of Dentistry, Faculty of Aviation and Space Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Faculty of Business, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts, Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Political Sciences, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Şereflikoçhisar Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Turkish Music State Conservatory.

In addition to the School of Foreign Languages, AYBU has the vocational schools named as Vocational School of Health Sciences, Şereflikoçhisar Berat Cömertoğlu Vocational School and Vocational School of Technical Sciences, and Vocational School of Social Sciences. When looked at graduate institutes, there are Graduate School of Natural Sciences, Graduate School of Public Health, Graduate School of Health Sciences, Graduate School of Social Sciences and Graduate School of International Relations and Strategic Research.

Moreover, there are research and application centers established in various fields within the university. These fields can be listed like that: family and society, learning and teaching, Ankara research, European studies, language education, dentistry, ecological studies, endocrinology and diabetes, interventional MR and stroke clinic, immigration policies, hippotherapy, advanced technologies, Islamic sciences, statistical consultancy, social policies and civic society studies, career planning and management, musculoskeletal system studies, competition and innovation, central research laboratory, obesity, psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience, psychology,

health, continuing education, traditional and integrative medicine, commercial and intellectual property law, distance education, and international arbitration.

3.4.4.2. Mission and Vision Statements of AYBU

The mission of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University is to raise individuals who are open to questioning and respectful of moral values in the fields of science, culture, sports and arts through qualified education provided in the light of universal values; to produce knowledge and technology through its research and present it for the benefit of society; to produce benefits for humanity through the knowledge and technology it produces with its entrepreneurial spirit; to contribute to the development of human capital at national and international levels with the awareness of social responsibility. When looked at the vision of AYBU in its strategic plan, it is to be a university that contributes to the construction of a good future with the education it offers, manages to carry the vast knowledge of our scientific tradition to the present day, produces benefits for humanity with its research and projects, is internationally respected, and has academic, administrative and financial autonomy.

3.4.4.3. Education and Instruction Policies of AYBU

The information in this part has been obtained from the policies section of the university's official website. When analyzed the document of policies of university on the website, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University states that, they try to contribute to the construction of a good future for its students with the qualified education and intruction. AYBU strives to carry the vast knowledge of our scientific tradition to the present, and has academic, administrative and financial autonomy.

With the quality education it provides, AYBU aims to raise individuals who are open to questioning and respectful of moral values in the fields of science, culture, sports and arts, to produce information and technology for the benefit of society through research with its entrepreneurial spirit; to contribute to the development of human capital at national and international levels with its social responsibility awareness. In this scope, the orientation of AYBU is to provide the highest quality education with an international perspective, to provide students with analytical and innovative

thinking by synthesizing these two most basic features required in the information society, and to continuously improve the quality of education.

3.4.4.4. Social Services of AYBU

The details in this part have been obtained from the website of the university. Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University states that it offers many services to its students. It is stated that in addition to the numerous advantages of studying at a university in Ankara as the capital city of Türkiye, due to the lack of a central campus. It also stands out with its accommodation and transportation facilities and social opportunities.

It has been stated that the buildings provide a satisfying environment for students with their social environment. It has been stated that the campuses are surrounded by places where students can carry out all kinds of activities, such as shopping, indoor and outdoor sports fields, bowling, basketball and football. It is stated that there is Türkiye's largest indoor swimming pool right next to the campus. The cooperation with municipalities is underlined in terms of social opportunities.

3.4.4.5. General Look to AYBU with Numbers

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University has 24.815 students, 17.451 of whom are undergraduate students; 2.631 of whom are students in associate degree programs, 4.733 of whom are graduate students. In addition, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University has 2.483 international students. The number of undergraduate students in the faculties of the university is presented in the table below.

Table 9. *The undergraduate departments and the number of students in each faculty of AYBU*

Faculty	**Departments**	**# of the Students**
Faculty of Dentistry	Dentistry	497
Faculty of Aviation and Space Sciences	Aviation and Space Engineering	158
	Aviation Management	
Faculty of Law	Law	1.169
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	Information and Document Management	2.431
	Eastern Languages and Literature	

	Philosophy	
	Psychology	
	Sociology	
	History	
	Art History	
	Turkish Language and Literature	
	History of Science	
	Translation and Interpretation	
Faculty of Islamic Sciences	Basic Islamic Sciences	735
	Philosophy and Religious Sciences	
	Islamic History and Arts	
Faculty of Business Administration	Finance and Banking	1.368
	Business Administration	
	International Trade and Management	
	Management Information Systems	
Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts	Architecture	519
	Visual Communication Design	
	Industrial Design	
Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences	Computer Engineering	3.042
	Civil Engineering	
	Electrical and Electronical Engineering	
	Industrial Engineering	
	Energy Systems Engineering	
	Mechanical Engineering	
	Metallurgy and Materials Engineering	
	Software Engineering	
	Mathematics	
Faculty of Health Sciences	Nutrition and Dietetics	2.489
	Child Development	
	Language and Speech Therapy	
	Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation	
	Nursing	
	Audiology	
	Health Management	

	Social Service	
Faculty of Political Sciences	Economics	1.342
	Public Finance	
	Political Science and Public Administration	
	International Relations	
Faculty of Sport Sciences	Coaching Education	220
	Exercise and Sport Science	
	Sport Management	
Şereflikoçhisar Faculty of Applied Sciences	International Trade and Logistics	591
	Finance and Banking	
Faculty of Medicine	Medicine	2.720
Turkish Music State Conservatory	Turkish Music	170
Total number of undergraduate students		17.451

3.5. Participants of the Study

In qualitative research, sampling is an important step for collecting detailed and rich data. According to Patton (2002), qualitative research often concentrates in depth on very small samples, even single cases chosen on purpose. Similarly, Creswell (2011) claims that with purposeful sampling, researchers purposefully select individuals and settings to learn or comprehend the fundamental phenomena. In order to choose the suitable cases, it is first necessary to determine the criteria for the selection of cases. In this scope, the researcher needs to define the cases to be investigated as a limited system or unit of analysis. (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, purposive sampling was used in this study. The selection of information-rich cases is required for the purposeful sampling. One of the primary objectives of this research is to demonstrate the opportunities and challenges that undergraduate students experience at universities as a result of institutional structures and growing dynamics in higher education institutions. These emergent dynamics have taken some time to form. Despite the fast expansion of higher education institutions in Türkiye, the focus of higher education dynamics has been on universities built immediately following the implementation of the policy of "one university in each city". Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Uşak University, Adıyaman University, and Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University established

with the line of this massification movement in higher education were selected as cases in this study depending on the reasons mentioned above. In this axis, the participants of this study were determined with maximum variation sampling techniques to analyse student experiences in these universities.

Maximum variation sampling is one of the sampling strategies that fall under the umbrella of purposive sampling. This sampling technique seeks to capture and describe major themes that span a wide range of variance; in other words, the core experiences and central and common aspects of a phenomena (Patton, 2002). Maximum variation sampling technique seeks to minimize the size of the participants to a minimum while maintaining versatility of the participant group at the maximum level (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The maximum variation sampling technique was employed to choose the study's participants. In this study, in the scope of maximum variation sampling technique, instead of collecting the data from only one faculty or department in the universities, the different faculties and departments in the selected four cases are included in this study. The detailed information on the descriptive information of participants were given in the Table 10.

Table 10. *The descriptive information on participants of the study*

	Category	**RTEU**	**ADYU**	**UU**	**AYBU**
Gender	Female	17	21	16	16
	Male	21	15	18	12
Graduated high school type	Anatolian High School	23	25	17	12
	Imam Hatip High School	7	3	5	3
	Vocational High School	2	3	7	1
	Science High School	3	5	4	5
	Social Sciences High School	1	-	-	-
	Private High School	2	-	1	6
	Open High School	-	-	-	1
Accommodation	State dormitory	26	24	15	7
	Family home	5	4	8	14

	Student home	7	4	10	6
	Private dormitory	-	4	1	1
Being first generation university student	Yes	33	33	25	16
	No	5	3	9	12
Faculty	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	9	-	-	-
	Faculty of Engineering	-	3	-	-
	Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences	-	-	2	6
	Faculty of Architecture	-	-	1	-
	Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts	-	-	-	4
	Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	6	4	3	-
	Faculty of Business Administration	-	-	-	4
	Faculty of Political Sciences	-	-	-	1
	Faculty of Education	4	7	4	-
	Faculty of Medicine	4	4	5	-
	Faculty of Dentistry	2	-	1	-
	Faculty of Pharmacy	-	3	-	-
	Faculty of Sports Science	2	1	3	-
	Faculty of Law	2	-	-	2
	Faculty of Theology or Faculty of Islamic Sciences	2	1	4	2
	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	4	6	-	-

	Faculty of Health Sciences	2	3	2	4
	Faculty of Tourism	-	2	-	-
	Faculty of Communication	-	-	3	-
	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	-	-	6	5
	Faculty of Aquaculture	1	-	-	-
	State Conservatory	-	2	-	-
The number of the participants		38	36	34	28

In this study, there are students of the selected universities as the participants. The data of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU) case were collected in the form of face-to-face interviews during the week of April 2-8, 2022. There are 38 participants in the case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University. RTEU has 15 faculties. The participants of this case include 38 undergraduate students from all faculties except three faculties of Recep Tayyip Erdogan University, which has 14 faculties that accept students. In terms of gender, 17 of them are female while 21 of them are male. When looked at high school types the participants were graduated from, they are Anatolian high school (23), imam hatip high school (7), vocational high school (2), science high school (3), social sciences high school (1), and private high school (2). According to their accommodation, most of RTEU's participants, consisting of 26 university students, stays in the state dormitory. While five of them stay at home with their families, seven of them stay with their friends in the student home. According to the status of whether being a first-generation student or not, 33 of them are first generation university students, rest of them are not. In the study, the participants from RTEU were from various departments of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU). According to descriptive information, the departments of the participants are business administration (1), biology (1), theology (2), political science and public administration (3), economics (1), law (2), Turkish literature and language, (2) English literature and language (1), electrical and electronic engineering (3), finance (1), mechanical engineering (3), psychological counseling and guidance (2), primary

education (1), elementary mathematics education (1), aquacultural engineering (1), social service (2), physical education and sports (2), medicine (4), dentistry (2), landscape architecture (2), and architecture (1).

The data of Adıyaman University (ADYU) case were collected in the form of face-to-face interviews during the week of November 27-December 3, 2022. There are 36 participants in the case of Adıyaman University. In terms of gender, 21 of them are female while 15 of them are male. When looked at high school types the participants were graduated from, they are Anatolian high school (25), imam hatip high school (3), vocational high school (3), and science high school (5). According to their accommodation, most of ADYU''s participants, consisting of 24 university students, stays in the state dormitory. While four of them stay at home with their families, four of them stay with their friends in the student home. four of them stay in private dormitory. According to the status of whether being a first-generation student or not, 33 of them are first generation university students, whereas three of them of them are not. In the study, the participants from ADYU were from various departments of Adıyaman University (ADYU). According to descriptive information, the departments of the participants are computer engineering (2), electrical and electronic engineering (1), nursing (2), pharmacy (3), elementary mathematics education (1), special education (2), medicine (4), Islamic studies (1), political science and public administration (3), economics (1), tour guiding (2), physical education and sports (1), English language and literature (2), elementary science education (2), history (2), musicology (2), primary education (2), art history (1), sociology (1) and midwifery (1).

The data of Uşak University (ADYU) case were collected in the form of face-to-face interviews during the week of December 12-18, 2022. There are 34 participants in the case of Uşak University. In terms of gender, 16 of them are female while 18 of them are male. When looked at high school types the participants were graduated from, they are Anatolian high school (17), imam hatip high school (5), vocational high school (7), science high school (4), and private high school (1). According to their accommodation, most of UU's participants, consisting of 15 university students, stays in the state dormitory. While eight of them stay at home with their families, 10 of them stay with their friends in the student home. One of them stay in private dormitory.

According to the status of whether being a first-generation student or not, 25 of them are first generation university students, whereas nine of them of them are not. In the study, the participants from UU were from various departments of Uşak University (UU). According to descriptive information, the departments of the participants are journalism (1), special education (1), Turkish language education (1), primary education (1), art history (1), psychology (3), public relations and advertising (2), Turkish dialectics and literature (1), mechanical engineering (1), electrical and electronical engineering (1), political science and international relations (1), architecture (1), medicine (5), nursing (2), public finance (1), physical education and sports (3), dentistry (1), Islamic studies (4), molecular biology and genetics (1), social sciences education (1), occupational health and safety (1).

The data of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) case were collected in the form of face-to-face interviews during the week of October 30- November 3, 2023. There are 28 participants in the case of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University. In terms of gender, 16 of them are female while 12 of them are male. When looked at high school types the participants were graduated from, they are Anatolian high school (12), imam hatip high school (3), vocational high school (1), science high school (5), private high school (6) and open high school (1). According to their accommodation, most of AYBU''s participants, consisting of 14 university students, stays at home with their families in Ankara. While seven of them stay in state dormitories, six of them stay with their friends in the student home. One of them stay in private dormitory. According to the status of whether being a first-generation student or not, 16 of them are first generation university students, whereas 12 of them of them are not. In the study, the participants from AYBU were from various departments of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU). According to descriptive information, the departments of the participants are management and information systems (2), psychology (1), finance and banking (1), Islamic studies (2), physical therapy and rehabilitation (4), business administration (1), architecture (4), finance (1), Turkish language and literature (2), philosophy (1), English translation and interpreting (1), electric and electronical engineering (2), mathematics (1), metallurgy and materials engineering (2), law (2), civil engineering (1).

3.6. Data Collection Instruments

The data was gathered in two ways which are semi-structured interviews and written documents and photos on the student related pages of universities' official websites. In addition to these two ways, the researcher benefited from the field notes made during the interviews in analysis of the study. As seen in Patton's (2002) notes, collecting the data from several sources results in data triangulation, which helps to eliminate bias in the analyzing the results and increase the research's trustworthiness.

3.6.1. Semi-structural Interview Form

In each qualitative interview, it is possible to encounter the situation of gathering the data you want or less. The interview is defined as the process of talking together, focusing on the questions prepared for the field of research, in which the interviewer and the participant take part together (DeMarrais, 2004). Interviews are necessary to learn about unobservable behaviors, emotions, and how people express the world around them (Merriam, 2009). When interviews are classified, there are many types of interviews. Interviews can be classified according to their structure, theoretical perspectives and the way they are conducted. Within the scope of this study, a semi-structured interview form was prepared, taking into account the sub-dimensions of the construct of student engagement that the researcher saw when examining the relevant literature (See appendices A-B). The interviews were conducted face-to-face on university campuses.

The questions in semi-structured interviews are less structured and consist of open-ended questions. In this type of interviews, each question consists of flexible sentences or includes questions with different structured techniques. In such forms, structuring techniques can be used, at least partially, in sections where specific information is required. Semi-structured interviews also include both the characteristics of structured and unstructured interview techniques. While sometimes there may be questions that can be directed around a topic to uncover issues that need to be explored, it also allows opening different topics and reaching new ideas with different questions during the interview process (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, Patton (2002) points out the importance of experience/behavior questions, opinion/value questions, perception

questions, knowledge questions, emotional questions and demographic questions in qualitative interview forms. Merriam (2009) also mentioned that interviewing is the best technique when conducting case studies of a few selected individuals in each context. These issues were taken into consideration while preparing the semi-structured form questions of this study.

The questions prepared by the researcher were revised by the supervisor of thesis for four times before final version of semi-structured interview form was defined. The researcher then provided an expert opinion from the researcher having experience on qualitative studies. The questions were updated in response to the feedback letter of the expert. The pilot research was then carried out. The interviews were transcribed, and none of questions in the interview were modified following the pilot research. As a result, the same questions were utilized in the main study. In fact, the interview form questions two basic frameworks in terms of the dimensions of student engagement. It tries to understand what university students experience in their academic, individual and social experiences during their university life and what they actually expect from their university in this scope.

In the first section of the interview form, ten questions have been asked for the aim of descriptive information. These questions are gender, birth year, the university s/he is a student at, department, grade level, cumulative grade points average (cGPA), type of high school graduated from, hometown, where s/he has stayed during her/his university life and whether anyone in her/his family has studied at a university other than her/his own (being a first-generation university student or not).

In the second part of the interview form, all participants were asked open-ended questions verbally by the researcher. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to experience the world through the respondents' eyes and capture the perspectives of others (Patton, 2002).

In the axis of the study, starting with questions addressing general university life, open-ended questions were asked to understand student engagement. Then, the open-ended questions regarding student engagement were asked to the participants, included the cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions of the construct. After asking questions about these dimensions, they were asked about their expectations from their faculty

administration and university administration regarding student engagement. At the end of interview, each participant was asked to score his/her university life out of 10 points and to explain why. The data analysis comprised all of the responses to open-ended questions.

3.6.2. Written and Visual Documents

Case studies are ideal for acquiring a comprehensive contextual data of the phenomenon, organizational processes, and the significance of these experiences for individuals involved (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). In this study, both written documents and photos are used to encourage a more dynamic and action-oriented viewpoint by evaluating reform attempts, policies and regulations of these case universities, rather than just only focusing on student experiences in terms of student engagement. In addition to identifying the opportunities and challenges of students in their university life, this study tries to create a rich and layered picture of the complicated reality of student experiences in higher education by looking student policies and regulations of these universities.

The written documents and photos were gathered from student pages of these university websites. The study made use of strategic plans, annual activity reports, university brochures, and other forms of documentation. In addition to these written documents, the study made use of the photos on the student pages in these universities' websites. The researcher identifies relevant documents for student policies and regulations in higher education institutions. Assessment and evaluation reports, strategic plans, accreditation studies, quality improvement plans, and campus publications were used as possible sources in this scope. Some of these written documents and photos of campus opportunities were obtained by the researcher during campus trips to institutions for the purpose of conducting interviews, while most of written documents and photos were obtained through websites of these universities.

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

Case study research is divided into six stages according to Yin (2014): plan, design, prepare, collection of data, analysis of data, and share a report. The researcher followed this sequence in this study. The interviews with undergraduate students by the help of

semi-structured interview form and written and visual documents were employed as data sources during the data collecting procedure.

Data were collected by the researcher through a semi-structured interview form that aims to reveal the experiences of university students in the scope of student engagement. The interview form contains questions under four sections: demographic information, academic engagement, social engagement, psychological engagement. After obtaining data collection permission from the universities determined as the cases, each university was visited on different dates to collect data. However, the data at each university was collected within a certain date in systematic way.

Within the scope of the study, university campuses were visited and interviews were held with student from different faculties and departments within the scope of maximum variation sampling. Data was collected randomly during the campus tour with undergraduate students who wanted to participate in the study after being given brief information about the research. The interviews were held face to face on the university campus. Because all of the questions are on student engagement, this construct of student engagement was explained to each participant verbally by the researcher before each interview to minimize misunderstandings regarding it. Student engagement may mean a variety of meanings for different undergraduate students. To avoid this misunderstanding, the researcher developed a complete description of student engagement based on the literature to present the participants before the interview.

In terms of the data collection instrument, the researcher performed 30–40-minute semi-structured interviews with participants on average. In all cases, the interviews were audio-recorded for transcription. The participants were informed that the audio recordings would be listened to only by the researcher and would not be published anywhere. The logic behind selecting semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data in this study. The semi-structured interview was used since these types of forms allow for both a structure that covers a predetermined set of themes as well as the researcher's ability to depart from the structure and ask some follow up questions. At the end of each interview, the participants were asked to explain the points that they

did not have the opportunity to talk about and wanted to add within the scope of student engagement.

When it is noticed by the researcher that the data was saturated, the data collection was stopped for each case. Yin (2014) defines saturation as the moment at which a researcher concludes that the categories or themes discovered are no longer being supplied with new material or that the participants are no longer providing new details to the researcher. In this scope, the saturation point was reached by collecting data from 38 participants from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, 36 participants from Adıyaman University, 34 participants from Uşak University, and 28 participants from Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University. A total of 136 students participants participated in this research.

Data from interviews were supplemented by a collection of written and visual documents. The assessment and evaluation reports, strategic plans, accreditation studies, quality improvement plans, and campus publications were examined as written documents. In addition, as visual analysis, student pages on the universities' websites and campus photos taken by the researcher were also recorded for visual analysis. The photographs taken by the researcher or existing visuals can provide the opportunity to remember details that can be skipped to reflect the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). It may also be possible to make sense of student life at the university through campus visuals and photographs on the student website that express what their experiences mean (Perka et al., 1992). These written and visual documents were collected during university campus visits, and student pages on the university websites became the access point in this respect. In this study, the complementary data source was used to triangulate data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The researchers used data triangulation to strengthen the trustworthiness of the results of the study by combining diverse data sources, data gathering procedures, and data analysis approaches (Yin, 2014). The findings which were obtained via various sources in each case were be compared and contrasted to provide more evidence and confidence in the findings.

3.8. Data Analysis of the Study

Collection of data and data analysis are generally carried out concurrently in qualitative research (Creswell, 2011; Merriam, 2009). In this axis, field notes by the

researcher were taken during the data collection phase. These notes can be included in the analysis carried out simultaneously during the data collection process. Interviews with open-ended questions, multimedia assets such as photographs, audio and written texts such as documents, field notes and transcripts create a massive quantity of data (Merriam, 2009). The first step is to get these data ready for analysis. The data sources of this study can be evaluated in two main branches. The first of these is student interviews analyzed through thematic analysis; while written and visual documents were examined with the help of textual and visual analysis, respectively.

The researcher acquires insights in the path of study when she contrasts and synthesizes the data and findings in qualitative analysis (Merriam, 2009). Inductive reasoning is also used in qualitative analysis. According to Lodico et al. (2010), this means that a large number of little bits of data are gathered and progressively merged or connected to generate larger, more general descriptions and conclusions. Because this study used a multiple case design, there was an extensive amount of data after all the interviews with university students and observations. To cope with this volume of data, the researcher used thematic analysis on the data set.

According to Terry et al. (2017), the process of discovering coherent and relevant instances, themes, and patterns in data to offer knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under research is known as thematic analysis. A qualitative research technique called thematic analysis entails finding, examining, and summarizing patterns or themes in data. It is a popular and adaptable method that may be applied to many kinds of qualitative data, such as written or visual materials, focus groups, surveys, and interviews. The methodical and repetitive process of classifying and evaluating data to identify important themes is what defines thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to increase understanding of the data. Thanks to thematic analysis, it is possible to separate words into minimal categories related to the content. It is accepted that words, sentences and the like that fall into the same category share the same meanings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). These stages were followed when the thematic analysis method was applied to qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006): (1) *familiarization with qualitative data*, (2) *open coding*, (3) *searching for themes*, (4) *reviewing and refining themes*, (5) *definition and naming themes*, (6) *creating a*

thematic map, (7) *analyzing and reporting results*, (8) *seeking feedback from other researchers*, (9) *writing the final report*.

While conducting thematic analysis, the techniques suggested by Saldaña (2015) were used. The categories and codes were created for the sentences on transcriptions of interviews conducted with the participants. In this process, first, the qualitative data collected from the participants were written down in computer environment, which is called as transcription of data. All these transcribed data were divided into codes after reading. These codes were then transferred to coding sheets. These codes placed on coding pages. They were grouped according to their similarities and closeness. In the next stage, these grouped codes were categorized under certain themes. The frequencies of the codes under each category were determined according to their frequency of repetition. Finally, in the light of these data, the interpretation part was started. The researcher also frequently used direct quotations to provide a more trustworthy results of the experiences of undergraduate students.

In addition, using different sources of data, which is one of the advantages of multiple case studies, the photos and texts on the student pages of university websites were analyzed. In the examination of universities within the scope of student engagement, it can be understood from the documents produced institutionally for the students and the visual and written materials on the student pages of universities' official websites, which are expressed as virtual faces (Emil, 2020). For these visual and textual sources in terms of academic, social and psychological engagement, Gillian Rose's (2002) content analysis method in visual methodology was followed. The frequency of visual elements in a well specified sample of images was counted and then analyzed in the content analysis method. Each step in this process must meet specific criteria to get repeatable and reliable results. For this, the content analysis in visual methodology was followed in four steps explained in detail by Rose (2002): (1) *Finding the images*: The student tabs of the official websites of the students' own universities were opened and their images were recorded. (2) *Devising the categories for coding*: Considering the academic, social and psychological engagement that constitutes the three main dimensions of student engagement, the material in the student tabs of university website was also be taken into consideration from the student's perspective since Lutz and Collins (1993) underline that category creation is an immediately interpretative

process. In this context, the process of collecting visual and textual materials is also decisive in creating categories., (3) *coding the images*, (4) *analyzing the results*.

Moreover, descriptive information of participants in each case were supplied using data tabulation, as indicated by Miles and Huberman (1994), which clusters data and assists researchers in representing data in an ordered manner. Data from interviews were analyzed using both within-case and cross-case methods. Within-case analysis gives detailed explanations regarding student experiences of each university identified as a case to have a better understanding of student engagement. On the other hand, across case analysis goes beyond developing an initial impression of each university as a case. This type of analysis enables to the researcher to search through codes for similar and different patterns with the themes chosen for study (Merriam, 2009). Cross-case validation gives a chance to make comparisons between cases according to their similarities and differences in the framework of student experiences for this study (Yin, 2014).

The interviews and visual and textual documents were analyzed for each case in this study. Each case was presented separately in the within-case analysis. Then, all interviews and visual and textual documents were then analyzed together to identify similar patterns and differences that applied to all cases using cross-case analysis.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness of the research is an essential component of qualitative research since it influences how well a study complies with ethics and scientific inquiry. Trustworthiness of the study is required to persuade the other researchers and readers that the findings of the study are worthy of consideration in terms of research arguments and research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Mischler (1990), from the standpoint of qualitative research, both the terms of validity and reliability are broadly concerned with the issue of trustworthiness in qualitative research. In other words, the idea of trustworthiness is linked to the study's validity and reliability of the study like in the quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the terms of validity and reliability for qualitative research. They used more qualitative terminology as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and trustworthiness for these criteria.

A case study achieves validity when a researcher makes appropriate modifications during the study to fully comprehend the meanings and experiences in a case. As a result, a more exact description of the case is attainable. The study must be internally valid or give reliable case analysis and results. On the other hand, reliability refers to the results of a case study being analytically transferrable to other cases in the form of experiences and example themes, as opposed to quantitative research's equivalent of generalizing to population (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2014). Creswell (1998) developed seven strategies to assess the trustworthiness of a study. The details regarding seven strategies and how these strategies were benefited in this study are presented in the following part:

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Prolonged engagement implies long-term presence during long-term interviews in the field with participants. It is necessary to invest enough time to become acquainted with the location and context, to screen for disinformation, to create trust, and to become acquainted with the data in order to obtain rich data. When looked at persistent observation, it entails finding the core elements most essential to the studied construct under consideration, on which you will concentrate in depth (Creswell, 1998). In this axis, the followings can be mentioned for this study. After the pilot study to do main study, the approval of the Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University (METU) was obtained in order to maintain the data collection procedure. After ethical approval was obtained, a petition was sent to the rectorates of the four relevant universities officially through the rectorate of METU to collect data from all faculties of these universities by adding the ethical approval. Then, the relevant universities approved this request. Approval letters coming from these four universities have been attached (See appendix D). Building trust with participants, knowing their culture, and correcting any misconceptions are critical for the trustworthiness of the study. In this scope, the researcher did so in order to take use of campuses as the research site and participant interpretation to get a variety of data sources. Furthermore, the data collection process took around a year and a half. The researcher spent a significant amount of time in campuses of these four state universities and in the cities to observe the dynamics and opportunities of where the university is located during the data collection process. The researcher spent at least one week-all day for each case, both during the day and in the evening. In this time, the researcher made observations, took field notes, took campus

photographs, and interviewed with students. The interview with each participant lasted approximately 30-40 minutes on average. The researcher established confidence with the gateway personnel and participants, visited the campus locations multiple times, and gathered key documentation from the campuses. It was explained to the participants that recorded audios would be only used for the scientific purposes. Furthermore, at the start of the interviews, the participants were informed that they had the option of not answering the questions if they did not prefer to answer.

Triangulation of the data. Triangulation refers to using more than one data source or multiple data collection methods for the analysis (Merriam, 2009). To obtain construct validity in case studies, Yin (2014) proposed using different sources of evidence. In this study, data were gathered through interviews as well as written and visual materials. According to Patton (2002), triangulation strengthens a study by combining methodologies. In this study, thematic analysis conducted with interviews would be supplemented by the textual and visual analysis approach via annual performance reports, strategic plans, documents on student websites of these four state universities. The researcher personally visited all of the universities involved in the study and performed all of the interviews. Aside from the interviews with representatives from various departments and faculties at the higher education institutions selected as cases, all written and visual materials collected from the campuses and attached on the website were analyzed for this study.

Peer review, *debriefing or external audit*. Peer review is a strategy for researchers to improve the trustworthiness of their study by having researchers or peers assess the research procedure and feedbacks in the critical points of the study (Creswell, 1998). In this study, the interview questions prepared by the researcher were revised by the supervisor of thesis for four times before final version. In addition, before the pilot study, expert opinion was sought for semi-structured interview form from the researcher experienced in qualitative research. Moreover, all interviews were audio recorded in order to capture every expression of the participants during the transcribing process. The supervisor of this study, who is an associate professor in the field of higher education studies, reviewed all processes of this research, including creation of research instrument, used sampling techniques, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

Rich and thick descriptions. According to Creswell (1998), researchers must offer a clear explanation of the research procedure, research site, and participant interpretations to enable other researchers for the transferability to other similar cases. Especially, all the cases selected within the scope of the research context were discussed in detail and critical information were presented. This section in particular will be extremely helpful in terms of the transferability of the research to different cases by other researchers. In this study, the researcher tried to present the details of the whole research process.

Member check. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. After the transcriptions of all participants were checked, the data became ready for analysis of data.

Negative case analysis. Negative case analysis is a methodological strategy in qualitative research that entails locating and discussing material that contradicts the research's findings. Negative cases known as outliers are those in which respondents' points of view contradict the general body of evidence. Because there was no hypothesis in this study, negative case analysis could not be applied by the researcher.

Clarifying the bias of the researcher. The notion that a researcher's preconceptions and biases may impact decisions and behaviors throughout qualitative research activities. It is an important part of rigor even at the earliest phases of the study. However, in this study, the researcher tried to employ all of the methodological techniques indicated above to perform the study process objectively.

3.10. The Role of the Researcher

The researcher's position including roles and skills is crucial in qualitative research, as they are responsible for evaluating and interpreting data. Considering this perspective, as the researcher of this study, I constantly reflected on my position, where I stand, how I engage with the research, my observations, and how my background shapes the process.

Initially, since I had no affiliation with the institutions where the research took place, I positioned myself as an outsider. Being an outsider helped ease the process of participants accepting my research invitation. It facilitated trust-building, as their

concerns about revealing their identities while sharing their experiences diminished. Some participants even emphasized that they would not have participated in this research if I were an insider. Additionally, the prestige and reputation of Middle East Technical University, where the research was conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation, emerged as another significant factor in convincing participants to take part in the study. During the data collection process, being an outsider allowed me to create a more relaxed environment with the participants, encouraging natural conversation and helping me understand their experiences more deeply. However, I realized that my previous experiences in two different universities as both a student and a research assistant guided me in identifying the problem and shaping the research focus.

Beyond my positionality, my experiences and skills in qualitative research also contributed to the credibility of the study. For instance, in addition to the qualitative component of my master's thesis with mixed-method, some of my conference papers and articles have utilized qualitative methods. It demonstrates my experience in formulating research questions, conducting fieldwork, and interpreting results. I drew on these experiences throughout my research. During the interviews, I was careful not to lead the participants, dominate the process, or ask sensitive questions. Even when I disagreed with participants' perspectives, I took care to maintain a neutral stance. In doing so, I made a conscious effort to control my verbal expressions as well as my gestures and facial expressions.

3.11. Limitations of the Study

This research has also certain limitations like in most of the studies in social sciences. Firstly, Türkiye now has 208 universities and 4 foundation vocational schools (CoHE, 2024), however, only four state universities in different regions of Türkiye have been studied as cases in this research. In fact, the focus of this study is on higher education institutions established with the motto of "one university in each city" launched in 2006. If it is included the year of 2006, 111 new universities have been established by 2023, 61 of which are state universities. Although generalization is not the primary goal of qualitative research, more studies are required to expand the findings. Although the universities established after 2000s were selected from the cities of Türkiye with

different development levels in this study, more research should be undertaken in other cities to uncover other conflicts.

Secondly, further research is needed to uncover the tensions in the scope of student engagement at foundation universities. Some drawbacks include state vs foundation universities and their possibly varied student engagement approaches and practices. Foundation universities also have the potential to explore and learn how student engagement is established and what their students experience in these contexts. The selection of only state universities as cases for this study may limit to reveal more diverse data patterns under student engagement.

Thirdly, multiple case study design may have been improved by including additional units of analysis such as various university stakeholders. The harmonization of the data acquired from multiple units would have added more variance and depth to the data. In addition, it allows the researcher to explore the construct of student engagement in general lens. In the study of student engagement at the university, the data could have been enriched by including university administrators, faculty administrators, department administrators, academics, staff of practitioners in student support services.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter has two main parts. Firstly, the findings of the within-case analysis for cases in the research are presented. Secondly, the findings of the cross-case study are given. Within the scope of this study, the four university cases are analyzed separately. It is then presented through cross-case analysis, including multiple narratives.

In the findings of this study, Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure model was utilized. As a longitudinal model, it provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding for student departure from universities. The model emphasizes the importance of academic and social integration in students' adaptation processes to university life. It examines student departures through dimensions named pre-entry attributes (prior educational experiences, family background, skills and abilities), goals and commitments, institutional characteristics (academic system including such as structure and policies of the university, academic performance, faculty-staff interactions; social system including such as extracurricular activities, peer group interactions), and integration processes (academic integration and social bonding). If students do not adapt to the university, their academic or social dissatisfaction may lead to the failure of these integration processes, resulting in student departure. In this context, Tinto's model provides guidance for universities to develop student retention strategies.

4.1. Within-Case Findings

Before the cross-case analysis, the university cases one by one will be analyzed because no matter how detailed the cross-case analysis is, it is extremely important to present in-case evidences. In other words, within-case analyzes form the basis of cross-case analysis. For this reason, each university case is examined within itself and then

reported under six categories. These categories are called (1) environment of university, (2) university in terms of academic engagement, (3) university in terms of psychological engagement, (4) university in terms of social engagement, (5) economic status, accommodation and nutrition, and (6) university in terms of political engagement.

4.1.1. Case 1: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU)

Within-case of RTEU, the findings of RTEU are presented in two distinct ways. In the first part, the collected data are transformed into descriptive findings. In the second part, the researcher provides an interpretation of the data and observations, offering an analytical perspective on the findings.

4.1.1.1.Descriptive Findings of RTEU

Under these six categories, the results of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU) are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. *The findings of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University (RTEU)*

Category	**Sub-themes**
Environment of university	Expectation of rich social environment Expectation of welcoming different ideas, thoughts and beliefs Unfavorable geographical conditions of the city and the university Conservative approaches and attitudes of the local people Social limitations of the city Underrated academic reputation in terms of quality Ideologically-coded identity of the university
University in terms of academic engagement	Academic staff - *Loss of talented and well-educated academics* - *Good communication skills outside the classroom* - *Dominance of some political ideologies*

	Teaching - *Incompatibility of the academic specializations and the given courses* - *Intensive course load* - *Theoretical-oriented vs practical-oriented courses* - *Offering alternatives for elective courses* - *Different evaluation mechanisms* - *Ineffectiveness of online teaching* Infrastructure and resources - *Selection of resources as main course materials* - *Adequacy of laboratory materials and equipment* - *Limitations of technological infrastructure* Academic culture - *Discrepancy between university promotion and the existing ones* - *Lack of internationalization efforts* - *Impact of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation*
University in terms of psychological engagement	Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities Varied influences of family dynamics Dealing with exam stress Emotional breakdown Navigating interpersonal conflicts
University in terms of social engagement	Campus life - *Inadequacy in physical structures of campuses* - *Separated campuses* - *Limited social opportunities of campuses* - *Organized events only on certain themes* - *Satisfaction with campus security* - *Transportation challenges to campus* Inactive student clubs Struggles in student relationships and communication
Financial issues, accommodation and nutrition	Financial challenges and budget management Challenging accommodation conditions Differences in nutrition opportunities

University in terms of political engagement	Need for collaboration between university administration and local government bodies
	Fatigue of bureaucratic processes
	Necessity of active student participation in university governance

4.1.1.1.1. Environment of University

Student engagement is significantly influenced by expectations of university students prior to enrollment and the broader context and structure of the university and city. Before stepping onto campus, students form a set of anticipations based on information gathered from various sources. It shapes their initial perception and enthusiasm to university life. These expectations play a crucial role in their overall engagement. Additionally, the contexts of university and city further impact student engagement. Under the theme of environment of university, seven sub-themes are obtained. These seven sub-themes are called (I) expectation of rich social environment and (II) expectation pf welcoming different ideas, thoughts and beliefs, (III) unfavorable geographical conditions of the city and the university, (IV) conservative approaches and attitudes of the local people, (V) social limitations of the city, (VI) underrated academic reputation in terms of quality, and (VII) ideologically-coded identity of the university.

Expectation of rich social environment. Expectations of the university experience entail a shift from a purely academic-focused paradigm towards a broader spectrum of social interaction and activities. This study indicated that university students envisioned a university experience characterized by increased social interaction and a variety of extracurricular engagements. In this context, participants anticipated a university experience where academic pursuits did not dominate.

The envisioned university experience reflected participants' expectations for enhancing and diversifying social interactions. This implied not only limited interactions within the classroom but also the provision of opportunities for students to engage and participate in social activities. Particularly, some participants expressed a desire to incorporate memories such as lounging on the university lawns engaged in

conversations, gathering around someone playing the guitar to sing songs together, participating in various sporting activities, and attending theater, cinema, and musical performances with friends. These desired experiences reflect the importance of social interaction and extracurricular engagement in shaping the ideal university experience.

The notion of students gathering on campus lawns for leisurely conversations underscored the significance of informal social interactions in the university setting. These moments of camaraderie would foster a sense of belonging and community among students. In addition, it would contribute to their overall wellbeing and satisfaction with the university environment. Similarly, the image of students congregating around someone playing the guitar, joining in song epitomized the spirit of communal creativity and expression. Such impromptu gatherings not only served as recreational outlets but also strengthened social bonds and cultural exchanges among students from diverse backgrounds.

Expectation of welcoming different ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. Most of the participants anticipated an institutional climate where adult individuals could express their own identities freely. They hoped that students would be able to voice their differing opinions on economic, political, and religious matters without encountering any form of constraint or suppression. They imagined the university as a place where different viewpoints would exist together, helping them grow and learn. These participants expected the university to foster and develop their identities without fear of censorship or reprisal, allowing them to express themselves authentically and without inhibition.

Some participants used the concept of a free university environment. They described this concept as detaching from dominant ideologies and embodying their vision of a place where diverse thoughts and ideas can be heard. This environment would facilitate open dialogue and respectful exchange of differing viewpoints, fostering critical thinking and intellectual growth among students. Moreover, the anticipation of an environment where individuals could be themselves without fear or concern for the future reflected their desire for a supportive and inclusive university community. They expected the university to provide a safe space where students could explore their identities and beliefs without judgement or discrimination.

In essence, the participants envisioned the university as a bastion of intellectual freedom and diversity. These students expected to be encouraged to express themselves authentically and engage in meaningful dialogue with others. This environment would not only enrich their university experience but also prepare them to navigate the complexities of an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

Unfavorable geographical conditions of the city and the university. Most of the participants underlined the rugged terrain of Rize. They focused on to present a unique set of challenges for urban planning and architectural design. Most of the participants emphasized the constraints imposed by the mountainous landscape on city development. One prominent issue highlighted by participants was the limited availability of flat land for building construction. This led to a compact architectural structure characterized by densely packed buildings and narrow streets. According to some participants, this spatial constraint not only affected the aesthetics of the city but also posed practical challenges for infrastructure development. Additionally, the steep slopes and geological instability in certain areas further complicated urban planning efforts. As a result, innovative strategies tailored to the specific geographic conditions of Rize were essential for optimizing land use efficiency and mitigating environmental risks.

Most of the participants in the study highlighted the perpetual overcast conditions in the region of Rize, attributed to both its topography and climate. While residents from the area were generally accustomed to these conditions, the participants from other cities expressed a heightened concern regarding the prolonged overcast weather. According to participant feedback, the atmosphere in Rize was consistently characterized by cloud cover and frequent rainfall. They noted that the weather significantly influenced their outdoor activities, often dictating their leisure time more than personal preference. Interestingly, these participants expressed a preference for clearer days when rain is absent. They found these days more enjoyable. This observation underscored the significant impact of weather patterns on the daily lives and experiences of individuals in Rize. In addition, it highlighted the need for urban planning strategies that would accommodate and mitigate the effects of such climatic conditions. For example, one participant stated that:

> I am trying to meditate, but because I'm in Rize, it's not very possible because the weather is always overcast, I'm always depressed. Unfortunately, I have been fine for a few days because it has not rained for two or three days. I said I can live. My mood disorder is not because of Rize, it is because of the weather – RTEU11 -

Conservative approaches and attitudes of the local people. The majority of participants noted a conservative demeanor and attitudes among the inhabitants of the city of Rize. They conveyed that due to the abruptness of Black Sea people's opinions, their assertiveness, and their tendency to speak in a heated manner, they struggled in terms of communication. It was observed that some local individuals exhibited strong and conservative views, which appeared to be intellectually closed-off, resistant to critical thinking and open discussion.

Moreover, they specifically mentioned feeling uncomfortable within the city due to these conservative social norms. For instance, the participants highlighted instances where both male and female students felt uneasy when walking together in the city, as they sensed that all eyes were on them. This discomfort stemmed from the prevailing perception that male and female students should not spend time together or walk together in public spaces. Such observations indicated the presence of social norms that discourage mixed-gender interactions and contribute to a restrictive atmosphere within the urban environment of Rize. This academic finding underscored the need for further examination of societal attitudes and their impact on urban dynamics, with potential implications for fostering inclusivity and social cohesion within the city.

> By the way, the environment here is not comfortable. How can I put it, people from the Black Sea region usually come here. I came from the west, for example, there is comfort in the west. I come here and there is pressure, religious and political pressure, you think ten times when you wear something, when you make a gesture, when you make a speech. Because there is a lot of judgment from people, I wonder what I should do, what I should say, if I say this or that, I wonder if they will criticize me. there is a lot of criticism here, people are harsh here – RTEU1-

Social limitations of the city. Some participants expressed their views in the study have emphasized that Rize was not primarily a student-friendly city, noting the limited opportunities available for enjoyable activities. They indicated that they could only spend time in cafes where they could play games such as okey and batak. They observed that students often could not participate in cultural events such as theater,

cinema, and various sports activities within the city. For instance, one participant stated that:

> The most important things you can do in Rize are reading books, watching nature, lying down and looking at the sky. However, these do not appeal to me. I prefer to be more active; I would like to do more physical activities, even if they are not very exciting. I like activities such as astroturf, basketball, volleyball, jogging and walking. But these kinds of activities are a bit limited here - RTEU5 -

Instead, they found themselves needing to travel to the neighboring city of Trabzon to access such opportunities. Some participants in the study perceived the proximity of Rize to Trabzon as both an advantage and a disadvantage. They noted the convenience of frequent dolmuş services between the two cities, which allowed for easy access to Trabzon's more developed and socially vibrant environment. However, they also highlighted that Trabzon offered greater opportunities in terms of both development and social activities compared to Rize. While students appreciated being able to engage in various activities in Trabzon, they expressed concerns about the economic impact of frequent travel, particularly in terms of transportation costs. Some students even mentioned preferring to spend time at the Karadeniz Technical University (KTU) campus in Trabzon over their own university campus in Rize, as they found more mobile and dynamic.

> Rize is not a student-friendly city, I think it is a very limited place in terms of opportunities, it is a limited place in terms of activities, and the people of Rize are not very open to students, they are a little harsh towards students – RTEU2 -

That means some participants perceived Rize as being overshadowed by Trabzon, leading to a lack of investment in Rize despite its close proximity to the larger city. Many participants pointed to the delayed construction of a shopping center in Rize as a prime example. For years, both residents and students had to travel to Trabzon for shopping purposes due to the absence of a suitable shopping facility in Rize. However, participants noted that this situation has partially changed with the recent construction of a shopping center in Rize.

This dual perspective on the proximity to Trabzon highlighted the complex relationship between the two cities and the economic and social dynamics at play. While the accessibility to Trabzon provided opportunities for students to engage in a

wider range of activities, it also underscored the disparities in development and investment between the two cities. Addressing these disparities might require strategic interventions to promote economic growth and social development within Rize.

Moreover, some participants highlighted the social advantage of the city's proximity to the Georgian border. They emphasized the opportunity to easily visit Batumi in Georgia for a day trip without requiring a visa. These participants, acknowledging that it is their first experience abroad, at least in terms of experiencing the sensation of being overseas, felt fortunate to have been able to taste it to some extent.

Underrated academic reputation in terms of quality. Some participants expressed that when they shared the name of their university with people in their surroundings or with individuals they had recently met, they often encounter a condescending attitude. In fact, they mentioned having similar thoughts before coming to the university. However, they believed that academically, the university was indeed of high quality.

These students perceived their university as academically quality based on several indicators. These included the quality of education, encompassing factors such as the richness and relevance of course content, faculty expertise, effective teaching methods, and resources. Additionally, the availability of research opportunities, laboratory facilities, and library resources contributed to this perception. The convergence of these indicators enabled the participants to regard their university as academically reputable. However, they realized that although RTEU might not be as prestigious as established universities like Middle East technical University or İstanbul Technical University, it was not far behind in terms of quality. They underlined that there was a perception of low university prestige in society for RTEU. For example, one participant stated that:

> I can say that it is academically positive. I think my professors are very high quality, they are all very high quality. Perceptually, when you say the name of this place, people belittle it, but it is not like that. At first, this is a university with a low score. Even in a university with a very low score, especially in the field of engineering, but the academics are very high-quality instructors. We receive the education we need to receive in the course they want to give in a very good way. We have absolutely no problems in that regard – RTEU19 -

Ideologically coded identity of the university. Some participants noted that certain ideological perspectives are more prominently visible within the university. In fact,

rather than just within the university itself, it was observed that when they talked with friends studying at other universities, RTEU was identified with a specific ideological identity. Some expressed that particular ideological views seemed to dominate the campus environment, shaping the general atmosphere and discourse. These views were not only noticeable internally but also shape the external perception of the university. When students interacted with their peers from other institutions, it became evident that their university was often associated with a particular ideological stance. Moreover, this ideological identification impacted various aspects of university life such as academic discussions, campus events, and social interactions according to some participants. Understanding this dynamic was crucial for addressing the diverse needs of the student body and fostering an inclusive academic environment.

4.1.1.1.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of academic engagement, four sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) academic staff, (II) teaching, (III) infrastructure and resources, and (IV) academic culture.

4.1.1.1.2.1. Academic Staff

In terms of academic staff, the findings of RTEU case can be divided into three parts named as (i) loss of talented and well-educated academics, (ii) good communication skills outside the classroom, and (iii) dominance of some political ideologies.

Loss of talented and well-educated academics. Many participants expressed gratitude for being able to learn from talented and academically strong researchers. They highlighted the opportunity to meet and listen to these academics, gaining insight into their perspectives and engaging in discussions about global scientific advancements. Many of these academics are either foreign-educated personnel or graduates of well-established universities in Türkiye, known for delivering productive and effective research. In other words, most of the participants expressed admiration for the academic prowess of the faculty. Despite initially doubting they could find such a strong academic faculty in Rize, these impressions were reshaped. The participants found the instructors' expertise in course content to be highly satisfying from an academic standpoint.

However, some participants also shared their disappointment when these academics, particularly those who have had the chance to pursue opportunities at the universities at western part of Türkiye, chose to leave after completing their mandatory service. They noted that these academics often viewed Rize as a temporary stop and departed from the institution once they secured employment elsewhere. The participants also expressed their opinions on the reasons for the departure of talented faculty members. They understood from the remarks of the relevant faculty members that they were dissatisfied with the mismatch between the economic opportunities offered by the city and their expectations. They noted that this situation often led the talented academics to relocate to cities where they could find more opportunities at similar costs. However, some participants highlighted that only Rize natives among the high-quality faculty members tended to stay in the city. While participants felt fortunate to have been able to learn from these esteemed academic, they lamented feeling unlucky due to the discontinuity resulting from the departure of these talented academics.

Good communication skills outside the classroom. Most participants highlighted the strong communication skills of their academics, noting their focus on listening to and understanding students' concerns. They mentioned that academics were directly helpful when it came to individual issues regarding course content, structure, and exams. However, concerning institutional and international issues, they listened and empathized with student requests but expressed their own inadequacy in finding solutions.

Most of the participants noted that they could easily visit instructors' offices and comfortably ask questions. They observed that most instructors struck a balance between being neither too distant nor overly familiar. They described this dynamic as feeling both close to the instructors while also sensing the need to maintain a certain level of professional distance. For instance, students felt welcomed to engage in casual conversations during office hours, yet they also respected the instructors' professional boundaries. This nuanced relationship allowed for an open and supportive learning environment while upholding the necessary respect for academic authority.

That means these participants observed that the instructors frequently implemented an open-door policy as communicated to students. They noted that instructors listened to

and showed interest in students, exemplifying an approachable demeanor within the classroom setting. This practice fostered a sense of accessibility and support. It encouraged students to seek guidance and assistance when needed. Additionally, it contributed to a positive learning environment where students felt valued and respected by their instructors.

The findings suggested that academics played a significant role in guiding and mentoring students regarding their career plans. Through their experience and expertise, professors offered valuable insights, advice, and direction to students as they navigate their career paths. This guidance often included discussions about potential career options, academic pathways, skill development opportunities, and strategies for achieving professional goals. For example, one participant stated that:

> I cannot say much for the university in general, but in terms of the department, our professors are very guiding. Our professors have acquaintances in terms of the sector. They direct us to people with knowledge from both the private sector and the public sector, and made us meet with them. They provide us with information and guidance in a very pleasant environment accompanied by a conversation. They guide us about what we should do, what we can do when we graduate from here, where we can find a job, where we can work. They help about all of them, they do what is necessary – RTEU11 -

Dominance of some political ideologies. Despite the general academic support and receptiveness displayed by faculty members towards students, the dominance of certain political ideologies was notable. Some participants felt uncomfortable with the sharp expression of these political ideologies at times. While these students accepted the presence of ideological diversity within universities, they perceived some faculty members as biased and partial towards specific viewpoints. The hierarchical structure of academic titles made it difficult for participants to express their own opinions.

However, participants with contrasting ideological perspectives from faculty members tended to feel more unsettled by this situation. Additionally, these students were observed that instructors' attitudes and polarized political ideologies could lead to biases towards the classes themselves, causing a loss of motivation among students. The tendency for students to associate instructors' sharp attitudes and personal perspectives with the content of the courses has been noted to bring about significant academic implications. For example, some participants often found themselves

reluctant to attend or engage with these classes to avoid such discourse. In summary, due to the match of instructors' sharp ideological views with the courses by students, academic motivation of some participants towards these classes diminished independent of the course content. For example, one participant stated that:

> I cannot have a conversation with some academics because they have certain views. When I am one of them, they respect my opinions. But they are so closed minded. For example, some academics supporting party A have an opinion against this direction. I see a mistake in party A and I say, they are doing it like this, but it shouldn't be like this when we look at the current system. They tell me, no, how would you know that this is the case? They say that if s/he is doing it, s/he knows something. If not now, you will see in 3 years...You cannot discuss with people, you cannot make people think. Thinking and discussing is now a cause of fear for them. They get scared when you say let's discuss with someone, they get scared when you say let's think to each other – RTEU6 –

4.1.1.1.2.3. Teaching

In terms of teaching, the findings of RTEU case can be divided into six parts named as (i) incompatibility of the academic specializations and the given courses, (ii) intensive course load, (iii) theoretical-oriented vs practical-oriented courses, (iv) offering alternatives for elective courses, (v) different evaluation mechanisms, and (vi) ineffectiveness of online teaching.

Incompatibility of the academic specializations and the given courses. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with some courses not aligning with their academic expertise. They found these instructors lacking in content and conceptualization. They noted that instructors teaching within their specialization offered a more effective and efficient flow, while those outside their expertise reflected negatively on their teaching. The instructors who did not teach within their field were criticized for not providing a theoretical framework and falling short in discussing theoretical concepts. Additionally, it was observed that instructors outside their expertise focused their courses on individual anecdotes and individual experiences. These participants believed that this process did not progress in a theory-based manner, failing to provide them with sufficient experience for practical applications in the field after graduation. For example, one participant stated that:

> In fact, we do not have expert academics in some fields, for example, since there is no expert academic in civil law, the courses are taught online and

> support is received from the academic of another university. There are very qualified professors, but their departments are separate in the constitution – RTEU7 -

In addition, some participants noted that some courses were solely conducted by research assistants, despite being initially assigned to other faculty members. They also highlighted that research assistants sometimes lack expertise in the subject matter or have insufficient teaching experience, leading to inefficiencies in the course delivery. This situation resulted in excessively theoretical courses or gaps in learning due to ineffective teaching methods.

Intensive course load. It was observed that the majority of faculty members shared their course syllabi with students at the beginning of each academic term, outlining the weekly course workload for the academic term. However, some participants seemed to struggle to keep up with the pace outlined in these syllabi. Particularly, it was evident that faculty members preferred an intensive pace in classes, aiming to address any learning gaps that might have arisen from the previous academic term, especially due to the pandemic.

Some participants reported difficulties in understanding the courses as they were sometimes delivered at a level exceeding their current capabilities. This finding highlighted a potential gap between the instructional delivery and the students' comprehension. It was suggested that the content might be overly advanced or the presentation too complex for the intended audience. For example, one participant stated that:

> Some of the instructors are very academic and high level in their courses, so it is difficult for us to understand. I think the level of the courses should be medium so that both the lowest level students and the highest-level students can understand. Some instructors are very theoretical and high level, which makes it difficult for us and especially our new friends to understand. Therefore, the courses need to be right in the middle – RTEU4 -

Some participants expressed feeling exhausted due to the intensive pace of their courses. Faculty members, without much interruption, immersed themselves in the dense content of the courses. They strived to cover topics exhaustively and provided numerous examples without considering whether students were tired or distracted or not. These participants noted a lack of interaction within the classroom, with

instructors delivering lectures mechanically as if students were not present. They expressed expectations for instructors to engage in brief conversations, make jokes, provide opportunities for discussion on relevant topics without resorting to sarcasm or insults, yet they did not observe these behaviors. These participants sometimes refrained from asking questions when they had doubts or when time was limited.

Theoretical-oriented vs practical-oriented courses. It was noticeable that classes mainly focused on theoretical frameworks. Instructors often conveyed these frameworks either through presentations or by directly reading from textbooks. Some participants expressed that the rapid pace of covering only theoretical frameworks makes understanding difficult. Moreover, due to the pandemic, topics were superficially discussed without in-depth exploration, leading to compensatory measures in face-to-face education. This has resulted in a faster pace and excluding the incorporation of topics from the original curriculum.

> I think that the theoretical courses are good in terms of the way they are processed, but the practical lessons are a bit incomplete. The laboratories are very good, but they are passed by reading from the book or reading the slides. It is also passed with fast speed reading. Also, since the courses are a little more restricted with the effect of the pandemic. There is a situation of catching up a little more on past subjects.

However, in Faculties of Engineering, Medicine, and Dentistry, although the theoretical frameworks were emphasized, efforts seemed to have been made to address these drawbacks through laboratory work and internship applications. The participants from these faculties underlined that their understanding is enhanced through the practical application of theoretical frameworks in laboratory settings or internship practices. It was noted that laboratory studies were generally conducted with the support of research assistants. The recent graduation of research assistants with a bachelor's degree and their awareness of possible challenging points also contributed to the effectiveness of the process.

In addition, the participants from the Faculty of Law emphasized their inclination to utilize real-life scenarios extensively while interpreting existing laws. They engaged in thorough examination and assessment of these case studies. Furthermore, they underscored the significance of case studies in facilitating their understanding of written texts, thereby finding their courses highly impactful.

Offering alternatives for elective courses. Many participants expressed their utmost satisfaction with elective courses. When comparing with friends from other universities, they noticed that elective courses often evolved into compulsory electives. According to their explanations, in other universities, elective courses for departments were often predefined without giving students the opportunity to choose. Most students in the department were required to take a limited number of courses predetermined under the elective category. However, they mentioned that the process did not progress in this manner at their own university.

They emphasized that they were offered elective courses with diverse content and were given the opportunity to choose. Furthermore, they noted that even if the number of students enrolled in a particular elective course was small, the course did not get cancelled, and it was still offered throughout the semester. Some participants even mentioned taking a course with only five enrolled students, highlighting that the small class size enhances interaction. Particularly in elective courses with small capacity, there were several advantages such as active participation, ability to ask questions, closer interaction between instructors and students, and a greater focus on individual interests and needs. In short, the freedom to choose courses according to their interests was greatly appreciated by these participants. For example, one participant stated that:

> Our course options are not very limited in terms of ourselves. From my point of view, I can take the course I want, they can give it. Our professors are very qualified. Our course contents and lesson plans are programs prepared by comparing them with other universities such as Hacettepe University and Middle East Technical University. The courses we want can be found in the program. They open them when we ask for them. For example, we wanted a vocational foreign language course, they opened that course immediately. They even spread it to all grades, now to the 3rd and 4th grades. When they see a demand, they can open it to us as an elective course – RTE12 -

Although rare, the existence of various assessment approaches has been mentioned. One of these approaches included presentations. It encouraged students to speak in front of a group and provide a good opportunity for self-expression. While students felt nervous at first when delivering these presentations, they indicated that they received support in terms of confidence and self-efficacy over time. Additionally, it was noted that presenting projects in front of the community fostered confidence, enhanced public speaking skills, and increased rhetorical power.

Different evaluation mechanisms. Many participants criticized the constant exam-oriented approach despite effective teaching methods by academics during classes. They highlighted the prevalence of memorizing oriented questions in exams. They found it inappropriate for universities to prioritize rote memorization-based questions over those that encourage inference, analytical thinking, or provide opportunities for discussion. They advocated for the inclusion of questions that stimulate critical thinking and allowed for the exploration and debate of ideas. These participants believed that this approach better prepared students for real-world challenges and fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

It was criticized the reliance on rote memorization for the construction of lasting knowledge. They said that even top-performing students often forgot the information from exams within two to three weeks. They emphasized that they only memorized the information temporarily to answer questions during exams. Then, their brain perceived this memorized information as unnecessary once its immediate utility passed. These types of evaluation approaches did not adequately assess their understanding of the material. This discrepancy between teaching methods and assessment strategies was a point of contention among the participants. The participants advocated for a more holistic approach to evaluation that encompasses a broader range of skills and knowledge acquisition.

However, the participants from the Faculty of Medicine expressed that they were evaluated through a committee system, which differed from the traditional midterm and final exams. In this committee system, instead of separate exams for each course, there was a comprehensive written and oral examination that covered all the courses taken throughout the semester. They emphasized that due to the limited number of questions used to assess their performance in each course, they believed they could succeed by studying all the details. In single-session committee exams, the number of questions in the test for each sub-course was limited due to the exam duration factor. Medical faculty participants expressed that they found it extremely challenging to have all their diverse course contents evaluated under a single system. They constantly studied to cope with this demand. Additionally, as they approached graduation, serving as interns in hospitals was be incredibly demanding both in terms of their student roles and professional work life.

Ineffectiveness of online teaching. Some participants noted that instructors tended to transfer the same strategies used in face-to-face classes to online learning environments. Describing the online learning period as ineffective and inefficient, participants expressed that although they appeared to be present in online systems during that time, they did not engage with the content. Attempting to replicate face-to-face teaching methods directly in the online format made it difficult for students to focus on the class. Most of the participants reported being unable to listen to online courses due to the excessively long duration of presentations, limited interaction due to technical glitches, and the blurring of boundaries between home and university environments. They emphasized the importance of clearly distinguishing between home and university settings. For example, one participant stated that:

> I don't see online teaching as real teaching and I can state this clearly. You progress in a system based on memorization; you try to watch a four-day course recording in one day, take notes and try to memorize it. You memorize this information and take the exam. This causes us to fall academically. If we look at the current situation, we see face-to-face teaching and online teaching at the same time. I don't attend online classes; I used to attend face-to-face classes. Communication, looking eye-to-eye, our professors' facial expressions and our facial expressions are very important for us. These are the elements that connect us to the class – RTEU6-

The participants who transitioned back to face-to-face learning encountered the negative repercussions of this blurred distinction, striving to address the deficiencies of the online period to meet academic expectations for this year's courses. Some efforts were made to rectify academic shortcomings experienced during the online period once face-to-face instruction resumed. The academics recognizing the limitations of the online learning environment attempted to cover the subjects of two academic terms within the same academic term.

> I have studied a lot online myself, let me tell you. On my own behalf. Since the camera is not turned on, it is as if the instructors are talking in vain. I came here and we see face-to-face teaching, I am satisfied with this. I am definitely not satisfied with online teaching. There is a huge difference between the two in terms of knowledge transfer. Eye contact comes into play, psychology has an effect on people. However, in online teaching, you look at the screen and you hear a buzz buzz buzz buzz sound. Face-to-face education is better, more efficient, more effective because even intonation adds something – RTEU1 –

Some participants underlined their experience of navigating and exploring online teaching for the first time during the pandemic period. They noted that even after universities transitioned back to face-to-face instruction post-pandemic, some courses continued to be delivered through online platforms. These participants mentioned that certain courses, by their nature, could be effectively conducted online, citing benefits such as improved time management and enhanced knowledge dissemination. However, they criticized the idea of delivering courses requiring interactive discussions in an online format, arguing that such courses are more conducive to in-person interaction. In essence, while not opposed to online teaching, participants recommended careful consideration in determining which courses are best suited for online delivery. During the online learning period, the sharing of class recordings and videos emerged as a significant advantage based on nature of courses for students. This practice afforded them the opportunity to revisit courses multiple times, facilitating a understanding of the materials. With the flexibility to watch recorded courses at their convenience, students could pause, rewind, and review content as needed, enhancing their comprehension and retention.

4.1.1.1.2.3. Infrastructure and Resources

In terms of infrastructure and resources, the findings of RTEU case can be divided into three parts named as (i) selection of resources as main course materials, (ii) adequacy of laboratory materials and equipment, and (iii) limitations of technological infrastructure.

Selection of resources as main course materials. The participants had varied opinions regarding the selection of course materials. It was observed that students in faculties focused on natural and health sciences such as engineering, medicine, and dentistry tended to share similar views on the resources provided. Criticism was not typically directed towards the predominance of Western-based sources due to the origin of developments in the field. However, when it comes to social sciences, opinions varied significantly. Some participants expressed concerns about certain instructors predominantly utilizing Western-based sources in class, with minimal emphasis on Eastern-rooted materials both as resources and content. Conversely, some appreciated the instructors who incorporated materials focused on Turkish culture and historical

background. They criticized the continual orientation towards Western-centric scientific research. These participants specifically advocated for the inclusion of works originating from Persian and Arabic backgrounds. They emphasized the significance of incorporating materials derived from Persian and Arabic cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of diversifying academic resources to encompass a broader spectrum of cultural perspectives. The research findings indicate that relying solely on a single source in classes leads to a lack of diversity and disregards different strategies. Students perceive learning solely from one book as monotonous and demotivating, with limited access to materials suited to various learning styles

On the other hand, some raised concerns regarding the use of specific outdated resources by instructors within the scope of their courses. They noted that some recommended resources did not align with current developments, particularly in a time where advancements were rapidly occurring. Some participants believed that relying solely on certain sources for instruction might not adequately empower them academically, given the accelerated pace of contemporary advancements. Additionally, they highlighted instances of inadequate resources within the university, particularly limited access to international sources. They expressed difficulties in understanding many English-written sources due to the lack of translations of current studies. The rationale behind not utilizing foreign language resources in courses attributed to the educational language of the university. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with the limited availability of international resource recommendations to enrich their extracurricular readings. They believed that if instructors incorporated course contents from leading researchers and scholars worldwide into their course materials, students would enhance their abilities in assignments and activities. It would enable them to generate knowledge from various perspectives.

Adequacy of laboratory materials and equipment. According to the findings of this study, participants from Faculties of Engineering, Medicine and Dentistry consistently reported encountering enough opportunities in laboratory conditions. They expressed satisfaction with the presence of modern and well-equipped laboratories, adherence to stringent safety protocols, opportunities for hands-on practical training, ease of accessibility and usage, sufficient space and capacity, and the presence of supportive staff offering guidance.

These participants specifically emphasized the importance of support from research assistants in laboratory work. Firstly, research assistants made them valuable resources for guiding students through complex experiments and procedures. Secondly, their hands-on experience and familiarity with laboratory equipment enabled them to troubleshoot any technical issues that might arise during experiments. Moreover, their mentorship fostered a collaborative learning environment. Thanks to this, students felt comfortable seeking guidance and clarification regarding their overall laboratory experience for their future field studies. These comprehensive laboratory experiences were deemed crucial by participants for effectively applying theoretical knowledge into practical settings, ultimately enhancing their overall learning experiences.

Limitations of technological infrastructure. Many participants noted the stark revelation during the pandemic of Türkiye's considerable deficiency in online teaching and learning. They highlighted the lack of preparedness, similar to many universities in Türkiye, for the sudden shift without prior arrangements, as well as the deficiency in technological infrastructure. Throughout the remote teaching period, they observed the prevalent use of virtual classroom applications, particularly those developed by Google.

During the period of adaptation to the diversification of teaching experiences, the inadequacy of technological infrastructure posed significant challenges. For instance, in the midst of instructors delivering courses, the constant overlap of voices due to open microphones was a recurring issue. It was compounded by the weak internet connection. This connectivity issue led students to disable their screen sharing with the instructor to at least ensure clear audio transmission due to slowness of the internet network. Consequently, despite instructors attempting synchronous teaching, they were unable to see the faces of their students. Participants emphasized the importance of gestures and facial expressions in teaching, expressing that instructors seemed to deliver lectures into the void. Additionally, participants refrained from actively participating in the class to prevent further mixing of voices. They were unable to ask questions or present their opinions on topics that required discussion. Therefore, participants indicated that synchronous learning objectives were not fully met. For example, one participant stated that:

> The sound chaos in online classes does not have the same effect as the sound chaos in the classroom. Also, since the instructors don't see our faces and don't lecture to us one-on-one because we don't have a good internet connection, and they don't call us by name, we get disconnected from the courses. To be honest, I used to leave online courses aside because they were recorded and I would put them aside to watch them later. This became a habit over time and had a negative impact on my educational life – RTEU8 –

Some participants believed that synchronous courses were not fulfilling their function due to inadequate technological infrastructure. Indeed, during synchronous sessions, those who did not have suitable conditions for listening to classes at home, individuals with limited or no internet access, and students experiencing various mental challenges during the pandemic expressed concerns. They noted that online courses were recorded and shared with students through video recordings to accommodate those unable to attend synchronously. Even students with internet access often did not participate in synchronous classes due to the lack of interaction. Generally, they attempted to compensate for learning gaps by watching shared videos of synchronous courses. For example, one participant stated that:

> In online teaching, since the instructors could not see the students due to technical problems, their motivation was decreasing. Both the motivation of the student and the motivation of the instructor was decreasing. Cameras are turned off or something because while explaining. When a question was asked, the student did not answer, students were experiencing internet problems. The instructors also wanted to involve the students in the course, but we covered all the topics as much as they could, they shared materials with us and recorded the courses. We exchanged e-mails at points we did not understand. Some had internet problems, some had problems in communicating with the instructors over the internet. You send an e-mail to some instructors. Maybe he had too many students, I don't know, he would get back to you after two weeks at that time – RTEU13 -

4.1.1.1.2.4. Academic Culture

In terms of academic culture, the findings of RTEU case can be divided into three parts named as (i) discrepancy between university promotion and the existing ones, (ii) lack of internationalization efforts, and (iii) impact of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation.

Discrepancy between university promotion and the existing ones. Some noted that their university employed a language of excellence and perfection in their own self-promotion on their websites, Yet, these participants failed to see these claims

materialize in campus life. They critiqued the discrepancy between university promotional materials and their own experiences, highlighting the lack of alignment between the two. Furthermore, they delved into specifics. These students criticized the inability to find various advertised events and activities. This disconnection between the university's portrayal of itself and the reality experienced by its students underscored a significant discrepancy in communication and expectations.

In their critique, some participants pointed out that the arguments and highlighted points used in university promotion materials failed to resonate with the real experience of university life. Promotional materials on the official social media accounts of the university often boasted about various events organized by the university, expressions of support for certain institutions, or announcements of achievements in specific fields, critics argue that as students. However, the participants said that these aspects were not readily apparent to them. Essentially, they argued that while these promotions might serve as enticing displays akin to a shop window, once inside the store, the advertised items were not readily visible.

> The university has an Instagram account. We follow them there and so on. We read in our university account. They say they have very good events. They say that our university has come from here to there, they say that it has helped this university, they say that it came first in this field, they say that it won a degree. But where is their contribution to the university? Why can't we see it? Where is their reliability for students? – RTEU28 -

Lack of internationalization efforts. As mentioned earlier, some participants expressed their frustration at the limited opportunities for foreign language learning at their university. They emphasized the significance of foreign language proficiency in enabling access to international developments and engaging with important contemporary scientific research. However, due to their lack of proficiency in foreign languages, students felt that their university did not provide adequate opportunities for accessing international resources or keeping up with international sources.

In addition, these participants lamented the missed opportunities resulting from their inability to capitalize on Erasmus programs due to their limited foreign language proficiency. They recognized Erasmus as a pathway to personal and academic development because of offering valuable experiences and insights into different cultures and academic environments. However, their lack of language skills prevented

them from fully embracing these opportunities and engaging in meaningful academic exchanges. As a result, they were unable to immerse themselves in the enriching experiences Erasmus offers. It hindered their growth and professional development on an international scale.

Impact of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation. The Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation appeared to collaborate closely with the university, significantly contributing to the institution's academic and extracurricular activities. Through its support, a variety of conferences, seminars, and colloquia were organized within the university. This collaboration was evident not only in shaping the content of these events but also in providing substantial financial assistance. Some participants indicated that the foundation's contributions were visible and impactful. This finding underscored the foundation's vital role in fostering an university.

The Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation provided scholarships to students who achieved success in university entrance exams and attained specific rankings. This scholarship scheme appeared to be aimed at attracting high-achieving students to the university. Through this initiative, the foundation sought to incentivize top-performing students to enroll at RTEU by offering financial support based on their performance in the entrance exams.

Students who ranked within the top 1.000 nationwide in terms of academic achievement (excluding additional scoring for placement) and were admitted to any undergraduate program at the university received a monthly stipend of 10.000 Turkish liras. Additionally, students who listed the university's programs in Faculties of Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering and Architecture, Law, or Theology as their first choice and were admitted to any of these programs within the top three placements received a monthly stipend of 5.000 Turkish liras. These scholarships were disbursed throughout the normal duration of the program, including any mandatory preparatory classes, and were paid over nine months for each academic year. However, scholarships were subject to termination if a student's overall academic GPA fallen below 2.50 out of 4.00 or if they failed more than one course. Furthermore, students who received disciplinary action such as suspension, failed to register for classes,

discontinued attendance, or opted to freeze their enrollment would have their scholarships terminated immediately.

While it appeared that the number of students eligible for this scholarship was limited, it was noteworthy that among the participants, two recipients of this scholarship expressed a heightened sense of economic comfort. They emphasized that the availability of this scholarship played a pivotal role in their decision to choose RTEU. Additionally, they mentioned their reluctance to move away from their families, as they resided in close proximity to the university. This highlighted the significance of financial incentives in students' decisions regarding higher education and underscores the importance of familial proximity in their considerations.

4.1.1.1.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of psychological engagement**,** five sub-themes are obtained. These five sub-themes are called (I) differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities, (II) varied influences of family dynamics, (III) dealing with exam stress, (IV) emotional breakdown, and (V) navigating interpersonal conflicts.

Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities. Most of the participants described university life as a stepping stone from adolescence to adulthood. Many of them discovered through their university experience that they were previously entirely dependent on their families. Tasks such as doing laundry, cooking, ironing, and caring for themselves when ill were previously entirely the responsibility of their families before their university life. However, these responsibilities now shifted to them. They mentioned that especially when they first started university, they spent a lot of time on these responsibilities because they were inexperienced, and they faced problems with time management. However, as their university life progressed, they gained practical experience in these areas and clarified their own responsibilities. They expressed that they would see the benefit of this, particularly when transitioning to professional life. For example, one participant stated that:

> It is hard not to study at university with your family, but it's a completely different thing. I am glad I am studying in a different city. If I had a son, I would have him study outside. When he studies outside the province, he will

> not study in the same province with his family. His family will not be with him when he has bad relationships with his friends or when he is in a bad mood. He will be alone. If you have problems in your friendships, you will solve them on your own. If you have a problem, if you have a problem at university, you will solve it yourself. If you have a legal problem, you will go and deal with it. There is nothing your family can do for you – RTEU5 -

In addition to the aforementioned points, some participants indicated that they used to feel the need to inform their families about every step they took and that making decisions independently was not very feasible. Particularly, they mentioned that they could not move freely due to social changes, the visibility of certain negative aspects within society, and political tensions that made their families anxious about them. Despite their families' efforts to exert control mechanisms over them, they expressed that they could balance this due to the intervening distance. They stated that the decrease in consulting their families in decision-making allowed their individual preferences to come to the forefront. For example, one participant stated that:

> I was dependent on my family until I finished high school. But, when you start university, you start to experience more adult life. You say there is a problem, instead of running to my mom, you start to think about how you can solve it. You are given a task. You cannot say let my family do it. You have to do it yourself. You have to take responsibility. It made me more mature in this respect. I can make my own decisions. I can manage chaos better. I was normally a very indecisive person. I want others to make decisions for me and I want them to take responsibility for those decisions. But, at university you are an adult. So even if the decision is bad, you have to make the decision. I now say that even the worst decision is better than indecision. Before, I did not take initiative, I used to leave decisions to my family. Now I can make my own decisions – RTEU14 -

For instance, a female participant, despite still living with her family, reported taking a significant step regarding herself during her university life. Due to the prevalence of headscarves among women in her family and close circle, she had been wearing a headscarf since her high school years without any pressure from her family. However, upon entering university, she began to question whether she truly wanted to wear the headscarf. Without saying anything to her family, she decided not to wear the headscarf. Initially, she felt she would struggle, so she went out in the evenings without wearing it. Later on, she implemented this in her daily life as well. She mentioned receiving no reaction from her family and emphasized that her university experience encouraged her to make individual decisions. She expressed it like that:

> I started not wearing a headscarf in the second year of university. I got the courage to do so from the university. If I had not come to university, I probably would have continued to wear the headscarf. It was thanks to the friends I met at that time. I do not like them now, but I thank them for that. It was a difficult decision. I am a Muslim because I thought it would be a sin. I do not want that. I'm more of a masculine person, wearing a skirt was not for me. I did not want to. It wasn't family pressure, but my environment, everyone in my environment was wearing a headscarf and it was like that. I thought I had to adapt to them, but when I came here I realized that I did not have to adapt to anyone – RTEU9 -

In contrast, male participants living with their families still seemed to rely on their families for individual responsibilities such as cooking, laundry, ironing, and cleaning. They expressed that their living situation did not differ much from their high school years. However, it is observed that female participants living in family homes felt obligated to help to their family members, especially with household responsibilities. They particularly burdened with household responsibilities due to their family members' work commitments and the intermittent nature of university class schedules. Some even had to take on the responsibility of caring for younger siblings. This led them to feel inadequate in allocating time for themselves.

Varied influences of family dynamics. Some participants often found that their university life exposed them to diverse perspectives and challenges their preconceived notions, including those inherited from their families. However, upon entering university and interacting with their friends from various backgrounds, they realized that these norms were not universally accepted. They came to appreciate alternative viewpoints and adopt a more inclusive mindset.

However, some participants seemed to encounter difficulty asserting their own thoughts and beliefs, primarily due to the deeply ingrained influence of familial values. Growing up, they might internalize the beliefs and attitudes of their families because they saw their families as authoritative and immutable. This might lead to cognitive dissonance when faced with conflicting ideas in academic environments. Moreover, these participants felt a strong sense of loyalty or obligation to conform to their family's viewpoints. Additionally, limited exposure to diverse perspectives prior to university might hinder their ability to engage in constructive dialogue and tolerate differences of opinion.

The participants who underwent university life away from their families initially expressed a constant longing for their loved ones upon starting university. The frequency of phone calls and video chats with their families decreased over time. However, those who gradually overcame their homesickness mentioned experiencing some positive emotions associated with distance. They noted that when families were nearby, they sometimes failed to fully appreciate each other and struggled to express their love when readily accessible. However, when separated, they reported spending higher quality time together and allocating more time for each other during holiday visits. Moreover, the experience of fathers often being unable to openly express their love, expressed as traditional behavior in Turkish families by these participants, changed with university life. These participants felt their fathers' love more deeply during their university experience. In sum up, while their dependency on family decreased, it was observed that their families' affection for them intensified.

Dealing with exam stress. The participants generally appeared to be most stressed by exams during their university life. The association between passing or failing courses and the grades added significant pressure particularly during exam periods. When asked the reasons for exam stress, there were various. These included fear of failure, performance pressure, time constraints, and high academic expectations.

Fear of failure raised from the consequences of not achieving desired grades, such as academic probation or delayed graduation. This led to heightened anxiety and stress. Performance pressure often came from both internal and external sources including personal aspirations, parental expectations, and societal standards. For example, due to the financial challenges often associated with university life, some aimed to alleviate the burden on their families by minimizing their dependence. Therefore, they aspired to graduate without taking gap years. These types of struggles added to their stress levels. For example, one participant stated that:

> Exams in high school, exams in 5th grade, exams in 6th grade in primary school, exams to transition to middle school, constant exams, exams, exams. Constant exams tire people out and stress students out at the same time. I think university students should be trained to live life together with education. Everyone grows up and thinks differently at university. For example, when I came to university, I had different thoughts, I had projects, but because of the exams, I have to postpone and postpone their projects and I forget some of them. Will I be able to pass the exam, will the exam be difficult, what if I fail

> the course, I am constantly experiencing these thoughts. But the university should be a place where you can go willingly, not just for lessons and exams – RTEU13 -

Time constraints such as tight exam schedules and limited preparation time exacerbated stress levels as the participants felt pressured to cover extensive course material within a short period. Additionally, high academic expectations, whether self-imposed or imposed by others, contributed to feelings stress. The participants generally perceived exams as the sole determinant of their academic success. Overall, these factors interacted to create a complex environment in which they experienced high stress levels during exam periods.

Emotional breakdown. Some participants coming from different city or region often encountered difficulties in forming lasting friendships upon entering university, which led to emotional distress and feelings of isolation. This struggle was exacerbated by the perception of constant turnover in friend groups, creating a sense of instability in students' lives. The emotional toll of forming wrong friendships was evident, as students experienced the heightened levels of stress and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, the prevalence of opportunistic friendships further complicated students' social experiences. It contributed to feelings of betrayal and disillusionment. These challenges underscored the need for adequate support and resources to help students navigate the complexities of social relationships during this critical period of transition.

Some participants noted that during their high school years, they experienced a greater sense of trust and familiarity with individuals from the same region. This period was accompanied by a more structured lifestyle and stable relationships. However, transitioning to a new phase of life disrupted their comfort zones, leading to challenges in adjusting to new environments and forming new friendships. Particularly, the realization that individuals might appear differently over time and the prevalence of artificial friendships driven by personal interests resulted in feelings of disappointment. These negative experiences caused feelings of loneliness among some students. However, they indicated that they gradually overcame this situation, with some managing to do so by the middle of their university years, while others were fortunate enough to fill the emotional void with close friendships right from the

beginning of the university. These participants attempted to fill the emotional void by replacing their families with close friends. This endeavor reflected their reliance on peer relationships for emotional support and highlighted the significance of friendships in their lives during the university years.

Navigating interpersonal conflicts. When most of the participants encountered problems, they often turned to their close friends for support, expecting various forms of assistance. This included seeking emotional solace by confiding in them and hoping for reassurance or comfort. Additionally, they sometimes anticipated guidance or advice from their friends to navigate through challenging situations. Furthermore, they expressed curiosity about their friends' perspectives and thoughts on the matter at hand, seeking insights and different viewpoints. This pattern highlighted the multifaceted role of friendship in providing not only emotional support but also guidance for students facing difficulties.

Some participants highlighted the necessity to seek out someone for support when faced with any problem due to the absence of their families. They generally attempted to cope with this experience through their close friends. In other words, they found a confidant regarding their troubles to them. At times, they shared their inner frustrations with them, expressed their emotions in their presence, and sometimes even cry in front of them. This situation was exemplified through various instances in which students turn to their close friends for solace and understanding, demonstrating the pivotal role of friendship in their lives during challenging times.

4.1.1.1.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of social engagement, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) campus life, (II) inactive student clubs, and (III) differences in student relationships and communication.

4.1.1.1.4.1. Campus Life

In terms of campus life, the findings of RTEU case can be divided into six parts named as (i) inadequacy in physical structures of campuses, (ii) separated campuses, (iii) limited social opportunities of campuses, (iv) organized events only on certain themes, (v) satisfaction with campus security and (vi) transportation challenges to campus.

Inadequacy in physical structures of campuses. It was observed that RTEU had separated campuses in different locations. In this research, interviews were conducted with students from three different campuses. Firstly, focusing on the main campus, Zihni Derin Campus, it was evident that the geographical conditions of Rize significantly influenced campus planning. The rugged terrain of Rize manifested itself in the campus layout, with buildings nestled closely together and constructed on hilly terrain. As a result of the uneven topography, there were no flat grounds on the campus, and stairs were a common sight due to the need to navigate the sloping landscape. This finding underscored the impact of geographical constraints on the design and layout of the campus, posing challenges for accessibility and infrastructure development.

The majority of participants in Zihni Derin Campus expressed dissatisfaction with the cramped nature of faculty buildings on the campuses, attributing it to the influence of geographical conditions. The lack of clear delineation between faculties restricted the availability of open spaces. It was noted that due to limited space, laboratory facilities for the Faculty of Engineering were constructed underground, resulting in lower levels deprived of natural light. This lack of natural light occasionally caused discomfort for students. Furthermore, some students expressed discontent over the absence of dedicated buildings for their respective faculties. For instance, the participants from the Faculty of Law highlighted that despite the department admitting students for three years, they did not have a designated faculty building. Instead, they mentioned being allocated a single floor within another faculty's building. These findings underscored the challenges posed by space limitations and inadequate infrastructure on campus.

The participants from the Faculty of Dentistry and the Faculty of Medicine were located on a separate campus. These participants considered themselves fortunate due to the close proximity of their campus to university hospitals. Additionally, it was noted that their campus consisted of only a few buildings, typically two or three, which minimized the visible impact of the terrain on building construction. Overall, participants from the Faculty of Dentistry and the Faculty of Medicine viewed their campus location as advantageous, particularly in terms of accessibility to hospital resources and the simplicity of the campus layout.

The Faculty of Education, located in the Çayeli district of Rize, stood out as RTEU's inaugural faculty, initially established under the auspices of KTU. Despite its proximity to the city center, transportation to the campus was facilitated through public transportation. These participants expressed a sense of disconnect with the physical structure of the Education Faculty, stating that they do not feel like they are attending a university. They noted that the building previously served as a middle school and later as a high school before being converted into a university facility. It was emphasized that the building, apart from being old, did not seem to have been designed for university purposes, evident in the layout of classrooms, corridors, and the campus grounds. They highlighted shortcomings such as inadequate classroom structures, cramped corridors, and lack of a campus atmosphere. These findings underscored the need for infrastructure improvements and the development of purpose-built facilities to enhance the overall university experience for students and faculty.

Separated campuses. It was observed that most of the participants at the main campus had limited awareness of the existence of dispersed campuses. However, the participants from the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Dentistry criticized being located on a different campus. However, in addition to this, they expressed skepticism about how the situation would have been different had they been situated at the main campus. These participants lamented missing out on events and the vibrancy of campus life. Nonetheless, they speculated that even if they were at the main campus, they would likely primarily interact amongst themselves, as they found it challenging to engage with students from other disciplines due to the academic rigors and focus of their respective fields. They clarified that they did not intend to belittle students from other faculties but viewed their academic pursuits and achievements as indicative of their social communication abilities. Due to their demanding academic schedules, they spent minimal time on campus, primarily dedicating their time to classes, studying, and committee preparations. Consequently, they expressed minimal discomfort with being located on a separate campus. For example, one participant stated that:

> I mean, we are only medicine and dentistry students here, we don't really meet students from other faculties. If I were on the main campus, maybe it would be different, but I don't know. If we come across each other in the dormitory, we chat, but of course, not to belittle, but because our level of success in the university exam is different, the things we talk about are different. So, you know, these kinds of issues – RTEU32 -

The participants from the Faculty of Education, located at the Çayeli campus, expressed profound dissatisfaction with being on a separate campus. They felt isolated and excluded, unable to benefit from the university's social amenities. When they visited the main campus, they found the liveliness and social opportunities they desire. However, they lamented that replicating this atmosphere at their own campus was nearly impossible. These participants felt like they were continuing their high school experience rather than starting university due to their faculties being housed in former secondary and high school buildings. They perceived their campus as devoid of activity because there was nothing to do and no opportunities to interact with students from other faculties. They reported merely attending classes and leaving campus afterward, feeling disconnected from the broader university community. These sentiments reflected a significant disparity in the student experience between campuses. It underscored the importance of fostering inclusivity and community across all university locations. Additionally, the findings highlighted the need for measures to enhance the social and cultural vibrancy of individual campuses, ensuring that students at all locations have access to a fulfilling university experience. For example, two participants stated that:

> I thought the Faculty of Education was in the central campus before, but when I came, they said Çayeli. But as you know, this place is like a high school environment. Being isolated from the main campus makes me feel like a continuation of high school. The main campus looks like a university. There are more students there, there are social activities. Rize center is closer to the main campus, but here we feel like high school students. I can't feel like a university student. I rarely go to the main campus – RTEU13 –

> I feel isolated because of being on a separate campus. The university should be a place where all faculties, including the Faculty of Education, should be intertwined. It should be a campus that allows you to see everything, that allows you to study more different people, but I feel like I am locked up somewhere, locked up in a small place, imprisoned – RTEU14 -

Limited social opportunities of campuses. Due to the topographical features of the campus area, it failed to provide students with a conducive physical space for engaging in activities. There was only one vast open space of the campus resembling an amphitheater, with approximately ten rows of seating benches located in front of the Faculty of Engineering. The participants mentioned that in this small square, a

traditional anchovy festival associated with Rize was held each academic year. During this event, they engaged in horon which was the region's traditional dance.

However, the limitation of social activities on and near the campus was more prominent. Due to the topographical constraints, the construction of sports facilities such as football and basketball fields posed challenges on the campus, resulting in limited opportunities for sports. This was reflected in the presence of only mini fields within the campus premises. In addition, cafes lining the coastal areas offered students limited social engagement beyond playing games like batak or okey. To address this, there was a pressing need to enhance social activities within the campus. Within the campus, discussions and conferences organized by the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation and the university itself tended to remain primarily focused on academic matters. As a result, students struggle to find entertainment and relaxation activities tailored to their needs.

Additionally, some participants expressed that the limited social opportunities within the university prevented them from finding the desired environment for informal discussions and exchanges on social, literary, and cultural topics. They indicated that this was because everyone’s perspective on university was generally academically focused, leaving little room for activities and interactions outside the academic sphere. As a result, these students felt that their need for a well-rounded university experience was not being met. For example, one participant stated that:

> It doesn't make any difference, you must be able to have a conversation on a specific topic and find opportunities to develop themselves in a certain direction. Unfortunately, we cannot find various activities in our university. If I turn to a friend on the road here, come on, I read Franz Kafka's book The Trial today, there is such a problem here, let's discuss a topic together and solve it, for God's sake, would you go? You did this in the criminal course. how are we going to improve this? – RTEU6 -

A participant from a social sciences high school actively engaged in theater and musicals during their secondary education. However, upon entering university, she faced difficulties in finding similar opportunities to participate in these activities. Additionally, this participant observed that there were more opportunities for TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye) projects during high school compared to university. Furthermore, the participant expressed a

desire to attend theater and dance courses, which were readily available during their high school years but were not easily accessible on the university campus.

Furthermore, the prolonged construction of university-oriented facilities across the seaside area facing the campus highlighted the necessity for expedited and effectively planned development. This development could serve as a hub for various social and recreational activities, significantly enhancing the overall campus experience. Despite the presence of tourist attractions like Ayder Plateau, Uzungöl, and the waterfalls of Çamlıhemşin in Rize, their location outside the city center presented accessibility challenges for students. Limited transportation options and financial constraints hindered easy access to these attractions, relegating exploration primarily to organized tourist tours. This underscored the disparity between the proximity and accessibility of these attractions. It impacted students' ability to engage with their natural and cultural heritage.

Organized events only on certain themes. Some participants highlighted those organized events in the campus lacked inclusivity, with emphasis placed primarily on the desires and preferences of specific groups. They felt that the events did not adequately support student socialization. The panelists were often perceived as representatives of a single political ideology, and events tended to focus on one-sided discussions on religious, spiritual, and current affairs topics. It contributed to perceptions of bias and exclusion of differing viewpoints. Moreover, discussions and panels predominantly centered around moral and religious issues. In music events, the styles preferred by young people were often overlooked, with a focus on Sufi and Turkish classical music styles. Additionally, participants noted a lack of social opportunities due to the closure of artistic and cultural courses organized by the Health, Culture, and Sports Directorate, citing insufficient participation as the reason. They mentioned that courses were only opened if a specific number of participants signed up. However, it limited opportunities for students who missed out on these courses to participate in social activities.

> Seminars are organized, why don't they come from outside and speak against us? Since this is a religious city, it is mostly religious issues. Things are thought about theology or there are organizations for Turkish Folk Music. Why isn't there anything in other music genres? Everything is oriented towards the old – RTEU30 -

Satisfaction with campus security. The participants felt safe on campus, as they noted that their student cards were carefully checked by security guards at the university entrance. Consequently, they believed it was difficult for someone who was not a student to enter the campus, contributing to their sense of security. Additionally, due to the small size of the campus and the presence of a small communal area, students tended to spend their time in these spaces. It gave them a feeling similar to being in a high school courtyard. Although they did not personally know individuals from different departments, the small communal area led to frequent encounters with familiar faces, making them feel acquainted with each other.

Transportation challenges to campus. Due to the geographical conditions of Rize, which was situated in a mountainous region, various challenges were evident in city planning. Particularly, narrow roads and the high density of vehicles within the city led to traffic congestion. The compact nature of the city center necessitated traveling to this area for fulfilling various essential needs. In essence, buses and minibusses from nearly every neighborhood of the city passed through the city center.

The participants residing in the dormitories the Student Loans and Dormitories Institution (KYK) noted far distance of these dormitories from the university campus in accordance with the dynamics of a small city. They mentioned that it took approximately 40-45 minutes to travel from the dormitories to the campus, attributing this to getting caught in traffic due to buses and minibusses passing through the city center. They suggested that this issue could be overcome by direct express minibus and bus services along the coastal road. They expressed dissatisfaction with the existence of a problem that could be solved with alternative schedules in the dynamics of a small city. Similarly, students living with their families in Rize voiced similar concerns.

Given the close proximity of Trabzon and Rize, it was observed that some participants reside with their families in Trabzon. These students mentioned that they could easily reach Rize through frequent minibus services, and some even mentioned reaching the campus directly with a single vehicle. It was interesting to note that students living in Rize seemed to have more transportation-related concerns compared to those living in Trabzon.

4.1.1.1.4.2. Inactive Student Clubs

As seen on the university's website, there were numerous student clubs; however, the majority of these groups were not actively engaged in their activities, according to participants' accounts. Even those that were active often faced limitations in support and budget, hindering their ability to execute projects effectively. Particularly due to budget constraints, their activities typically revolved around brainstorming sessions and discussion forums. While each student club had its own mission and interests, they generally aimed to attract students through travel plans.

It was revealed that the university allocated space to student clubs for them to conduct their activities and hold meetings. Members of these clubs often utilized these rooms for discussions and brainstorming sessions. When examining the interaction between student clubs, it was observed that those with rooms close to each other tended to have more communication. Communication between student clubs within the university and the generally small size of their memberships often led to these clubs becoming more intertwined over time. For instance, student clubs in close communication tended to be more aware of each other's activities. This tendency increased member participation in each other's events. However, such tight interaction sometimes led student clubs to deviate from their core missions and result in a decrease in activities directly associated with the club's name. Especially when numerous student clubs constantly engaged with each other, those might veer away from its original focus and instead prioritize more general and ambiguous activities. In such cases, it was important for student clubs to be cautious in maintaining their unique identities.

One participant expressed constraints within their campus environment. It led to limitations in pursuing desired activities. They highlighted the communication established with certain student clubs at Trabzon University, where mutual invitations to events were extended, aiming to foster robust interaction. However, the incurred travel expenses served as a hindrance. Therefore, these high costs restricted participation in each other's events.

4.1.1.1.4.3. Struggles in Student Relationships and Communication

According to some participants, student population in Rize and its surrounding areas tended to form relatively homogenous groups in terms of political and cultural backgrounds. This homogeneity could often make it challenging for the students from different regions to express their own opinions freely, as the perspectives and values of the majority might dominate. Consequently, there were some difficulties in expressing and accepting different ideas due to group pressure and conformity expectations. Moreover, some faculty members alongside students influenced these political and cultural dynamics within the university environment. Some faculty members contributed to the reinforcement of this environment by imparting their own political and cultural views to students or by supporting specific groups. This dynamic diminished students' confidence in expressing diverse viewpoints and shaping the nature of debate and discourse within the academic setting.

> Since there are not many people from outside here, since there are always people from Rize, their perspectives are the same. They look through blinders. So even if you talk about an economy, they look sterile even in this field. How can I tell you, I don't want to talk too politically, but the rightist-leftist account is too much. Someone can come out and say that the economy is very good under these conditions because his budget is enough for him... We can't say we can't afford it here. This tension wears us out like this, that is, we cannot express our opinions. Some of our professors also put us in this situation. I mean, the lecturers always talk about the past, but the situation of that period is not the same as the situation of this period – RTEU36 -

The tendency of many talented researchers to sought opportunities at universities in other cities often results in faculty members predominantly comprising individuals from the region. While there were instances of both local individuals and talented faculty members, the prevalence of faculty members from the same region complicated the introduction of diverse cultural perspectives, thoughts, and structures within the university. It was observed that certain ideologies dominate, leading to an uncomfortable atmosphere where even attire becomes a subject of scrutiny, with students exchanging disapproving glances. Consequently, some participants did not feel at ease on campus. For instance, one participant noted criticism directed at a female friend in the Faculty of Theology for not wearing a headscarf. This suggested the existence of a pressured environment where both students and faculty members played significant roles in its formation.

For example, there is such a situation in theology. When a female friend not using headscarf of mine goes to the. courses, she sees a lot of pressure. There is pressure like why are you use headscarf, you are studying at this university, how can you wear like that? Here you are expected to be one type. You are afraid when you walk in the center. There is pressure especially from men, there is a point of view.

The Faculty of Education being situated in Çayeli campus presented a significant barrier for communication with students on the main campus. Students in this faculty expressed frustration over their inability to engage in joint activities with individuals from different departments. For example, one participant stated that:

> Everyone can come together, I would say that there should be someone from every community, not from one department but from different departments. People are limited only to their own departments. When they go to other departments, no one knows each other – RTEU29 -

On the other hand, the participants from the Faculties of Dentistry and Medicine, though not physically distant from the main campus, were located in a separate campus exclusively dedicated to these disciplines. It was observed that this campus solely accommodated students from the Faculties of Dentistry and Medicine. These students expressed rare visits to the main campus and no need to do so. This was attributed to the intensive academic nature of their programs, where their interactions with others were primarily limited to tea and coffee breaks. Additionally, they did not perceive a deficiency in acquainting themselves with students from other faculties. They believed that due to their higher academic rankings in university entrance exams, they might struggle to find common topics of conversation with students from other faculties. Furthermore, the participants in these faculties perceived a better understanding of each other's thinking styles, needs, and expectations, fostering a stronger sense of academic camaraderie.

4.1.1.1.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

Under the category of financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) financial challenges and budget management, (II) challenging accommodation conditions, and (III) differences in nutrition opportunities.

Financial challenges and budget management. Most of the participants expressed their economic distress, juxtaposing their own circumstances with those of their relatives and older siblings during their respective university experiences. Through discussions with their elder siblings, they learned that the state scholarships and loans received during previous academic periods, alongside minor financial contributions from their families, sufficed to meet their needs. However, at present, participants found themselves grappling with significant financial hardship. They were unable to allocate funds for recreational pursuits such as theater, cinema, or festivals, and struggle to cover even basic living expenses. This showed a marked disparity between the financial support available to previous generations and the current challenges faced by today's students. For example, one participant stated that:

> In fact, if we talk about the food in the KYK dormitory, they are very troublesome both in price and in portions. We constantly have to eat outside. No matter what I eat, when I go to the market, I cannot leave by paying less than 100 Turkish liras. My sister also studied at university, when I talked to her, she said that she was able to get by with my family adding very little to the loan she received. Somehow, in a way I don't understand, this period is very difficult for me economically. Not only does it put a strain on me, it also puts a strain on my family – RTEU9-

Additionally, through the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Development Foundation, students who achieved a certain ranking in university entrance exams were awarded scholarships if they enrolled at RTEU. These rankings determined by the foundation varied from faculty to faculty. The students who qualified for this scholarship reported that in their initial years, the scholarship amount was sufficient, and some could even save money. However, they now found themselves barely meeting their basic and some specific needs. They noted that even this scholarship which was higher than KYK loans and scholarship, it was inadequate to cover their expenses.

Many participants expressed significant economic distress, with recurring periods of financial strain causing them considerable unease. They highlighted that the recent increase in fuel prices exacerbated the already challenging economic circumstances they face because said the hike in fuel prices mean that everything would go up. They also indicated that they scrutinize their own finances critically when making purchases, acknowledging the profound impact on their economic wellbeing.

> People started to invest in gasoline as prices increased, but as students we cannot afford it. When we go to the market, we think three or five times about what we are going to buy. So, life is very expensive here. At first, when I first came here, I was able to manage everything, but after a while it broke. There have been too many price increases and we cannot do anything.

Some participants indicated that despite Rize being a small city, the cost of living exceeded their expectations. Despite its modest scale, Rize presented significant financial hurdles for students due to various factors. Firstly, limited accommodation options often led to high rental prices, exacerbated by a competitive rental market fueled by a growing student population. Additionally, the cost of living in terms of daily expenses such as groceries, transportation, and leisure activities tended to be disproportionately high compared to other cities of similar size. This phenomenon could be attributed to various factors, including the city's geographical location, which may affect the availability and pricing of goods and services. Overall, despite its small-town charm, the economic challenges faced by students in Rize underscored the need for targeted support and resources to ensure their academic success and wellbeing.

Challenging accommodation conditions. The participants residing with their families or friends at home exhibited a notably heightened perception of comfort compared to those living in dormitories. This disparity in comfort perception was attributed to the presence of personalized spaces within familial households, particularly individual bedrooms designated for themselves. These participants emphasized the significance of having their own rooms, noting that these spaces provided them with a sense of sanctuary. They could retreat for solitude and relaxation. The autonomy afforded by these personalized spaces allowed individuals to tailor their environments according to their preferences. It further enhanced their comfort levels. In short, the presence of personalized spaces within households emerged as a critical factor in shaping participants' comfort perceptions.

On the other hand, some of the students residing in KYK dormitories mentioned that they were accustomed to a communal living culture due to their previous experiences in boarding schools during their high school years. As a result, they expressed that they did not experience significant difficulty adjusting to dormitory life. The familiarity with communal living environments from their past experiences instilled a

sense of comfort and adaptability. These participants highlighted that their prior exposure to shared living spaces equipped them with the necessary skills to navigate communal dynamics.

The participants experiencing dormitory life for the first time expressed considerable difficulty, particularly in sharing common areas with unfamiliar individuals. The divergence in everyone's sense of order and routines necessitated adaptation. These participants highlighted various issues encountered, including difficulties with lights-out times due to differing sleep schedules, personal belongings being moved or lost, and disruptions from loud conversations. However, those who successfully negotiated these challenges with their roommates eventually found enjoyment in communal living. Conversely, students unable to resolve conflicts expressed dissatisfaction with dormitory life, desiring to move to student apartments. Yet, the high rental costs hindered their ability to fulfill this desire. In summary, while the camaraderie of roommates could enhance happiness in dormitory life, unresolved issues could render dormitory living undesirable.

The study revealed a notable discrepancy in the geographical distribution of male and female KYK dormitories. Male KYK dormitories generally positioned at locations disadvantaged in proximity compared to their female counterparts. Consequently, male students residing in these dormitories often faced longer commute times and encountered logistical challenges in accessing campus amenities. The disparity in location between male and female dormitories underscored potential inequities in access to resources and opportunities.

In addition, according to some participants, the observed structure and regulations within KYK dormitories evoked similarities to a lodge associated with a religious order rather than a conventional state-run facility. For example, mandatory lights-out times reflected a disciplined environment focused on adherence to codes of conduct and strict discipline. In addition, some participants raised concerns regarding occasional interventions by the KYK dormitory management in their personal preferences and lifestyles. They expressed instances where their choices and ways of living were been subject to interference, affecting their autonomy and personal freedom within the dormitory environment. For instance, one participant stated that:

> The KYK dormitory is generally good with its facilities, but, they behave as if it is not a state dormitory but a religious cult's dormitory. for example, there are not many girls in my department in the electrical and electronics department. Most of them are males in my department. I can sit with them in the cafe, it is very normal. They came to me and said, "You are sitting with men, such things are not welcome in Rize. You can't say anything to me, they act like a cult dormitory – RTEU9 -

Some participants expressed that they did not face significant difficulties in finding accommodation in KYK dormitories. However, they anticipated potential challenges in KYK dormitory placements due to the continuous increase in demand, primarily driven by the expanding student population. This anticipation was rooted in their observation of a steady rise in the number of applicants competing for available dormitory spots. Consequently, some participants foresaw that despite the current ease of access, future scenarios might witness shortages or delays in KYK dormitory allocations. This apprehension reflected concerns regarding the sustainability of the existing system to effectively cope with the mounting demand for student accommodation.

Differences in nutrition opportunities. Almost all participants conveyed a high level of satisfaction with the dining options provided by university cafeteria. Firstly, they praised the quality of the meals, noting the freshness of ingredients, flavors, and overall preparation standards. Furthermore, participants lauded the affordability of the meals. They expressed appreciation for the reasonable pricing that accommodates students with varying budgets. Overall, their positive feedback underscored the university's commitment to providing nutritious, diverse, and cost-effective dining experiences for its students.

While students expressed high satisfaction with the cafeteria services provided by the university, their experiences with dining at KYK dormitories were markedly different. These dormitories contracted catering services through private companies via competitive bidding processes. However, students frequently found these services lacking, citing issues of insufficient financial support for students from the government and the need to spend additional money out of pocket to adequately nourish. Apart from being expensive, students often encountered challenges such as limited variety of dishes, small portion sizes, and frequent issues with cold serving temperatures. Consequently, students residing in KYK dormitories dissatisfied with their dining

options. This opted to prioritize university cafeterias rather than using the meals options in KYK dormitories, especially for dinners.

In addition, students found the private cafeteria services outside of the university cafeteria to be extremely inadequate. They noted the presence of only a few cafes and restaurants within the cultural center. However, due to their financial constraints, they could only occasionally afford to patronize these establishments. Moreover, when they did visit with friends, they felt pressured to conform to a culture where everyone at the table was expected to place an order, even if only one person initially intended to dine. This pressure deterred them from wanting to frequent these places.

4.1.1.1.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of political engagement, three sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) need for collaboration between university administration and local government bodies, (II) fatigue of bureaucratic processes, and (III) necessity of active student participation in university governance.

Need for collaboration between university administration and local government bodies. The research reveals that many participants were concerned about the inadequate geographical conditions on campus for developing student social living spaces, which limited the construction of new social facilities. They suggested that university administration should grant more autonomy in managing these limitations. For instance, many participants expected the university to liaise with the municipality regarding transportation to the campus. They requested express bus and minibus services from the KYK dormitory area to the campus via the coastal road, as the buses and minibuses they took from the dormitories enter the city center, causing traffic congestion and resulting in a loss of time.

The participants also highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for students to access social amenities within the city. They emphasized that, given the constraints on campus, it was crucial to establish environments where students could find necessary social opportunities off-campus. Additionally, to address the deficiencies in the city's social life, participants advocate for a collaborative effort between university officials and local government authorities. This cooperation could aim to enhance

social living conditions and provide students with access to activities such as music, arts, theater, and other cultural events. By improving the availability and quality of these social amenities, the RTEU administration and local authorities could significantly enrich the student experience and meet their expectations for a vibrant social life.

Fatigue of bureaucratic processes. In navigating the bureaucratic processes of university environments, some participants often found themselves grappling with a sense of exhaustion and frustration. Decision-making processes demanded premeditated commitments weeks in advance. However, it limited to adaptability of organization in changing conditions, as voiced by members of various student clubs. Whether it be organizing conferences or orchestrating social events, participants expressed the formidable challenge of considering every facet of planning. Moreover, the omnipresence of bureaucratic correspondence within the university exacerbated these frustrations with protracted procedures and processes amplifying the struggle. Concrete examples abounded such as the prolonged wait times for approvals and the intricate web of administrative protocols hindering progress. The perpetual battle against bureaucratic chaos only served to compound these challenges, further complicating the landscape of university engagement. In essence, bureaucracy fatigue emerged as a palpable impediment. The fatigue of bureaucratic processes sapped the energy and enthusiasm of university students as they navigated the intricate web of administrative barriers. For example, one participant stated that:

> Our university has too much bureaucracy. Please take note of this and tell them. Because there is so much bureaucracy, it takes us a week to get permission to do something. You have to plan a week in advance and act accordingly. Of course, this situation is challenging us in every way. This is not only within the university, but also within other public institutions that we will organize the event together. When the bureaucracy doubles when we are a university, a more challenging process awaits us. When we are going to organize a conference, we first try to solve this bureaucracy among ourselves. This situation inevitably challenges us – RTEU10-

Necessity of active student participation in university governance. Some participants were observed to have academic and social expectations, which they predominantly discussed amongst themselves. Particularly, they emphasized the necessity for students to take an active role in university governance. For instance, one participant

proposed the establishment of student-led committees to address specific issues such as curriculum development or campus facilities improvement. Additionally, initiatives and regular meetings between students and university administrators were suggested to foster open communication and collaboration. While there was a prevailing sentiment among students about the inadequacy of their representation, there was also a recognition for meaningful transformation within the university via active student involvement in its governance. To achieve this, participants stressed the need for students to move beyond passive and ineffective roles. It was advocated for a cultural shift that promotes active engagement, leadership training, and open communication between students and administrators. For example, one participant stated that:

> If we do not do something as students, there is nothing the administration can do. In order for an administration to do something, students need to form communities among themselves, and this is what we call a university. Students at the university need to unite among themselves and form activities and committees. What makes a university a university is the students in it, not the administration. Students change the ideas of the administration. Students manage the activities to be organized by the administration, but our students are very inadequate in this regard – RTEU6 –

4.1.1.2. Interpretative Findings of RTEU

In this section, for RTEU participants, the researcher's interpretations regarding the six fundamental categories of student engagement are included. Through a more interpretative approach, this analysis tries to delve into each category. It contributes to a comprehensive understanding of student engagement in RTEU.

4.1.1.2.1. Environment of University

The findings highlight several points related to student engagement in relation to environment of university, particularly influenced by pre-enrollment expectations, the broader environmental and social factors of the university and its surrounding city.

Pre-enrollment expectations as a foundation of engagement. *The expectations and past experiences of university students significantly shape their engagement levels*. These expectations encompass a range of aspects from social interactions to academic environment. Therefore, universities should prioritize creating and promoting an

accurate representation of campus life that aligns with these expectations to foster a more engaging environment.

Social environment and extracurricular activities. One of the critical themes that emerged is the expectation of a rich social environment. Students envision a university experience that extends beyond academic pursuits, encompassing diverse social interactions and extracurricular activities. This expectation highlights the importance of providing opportunities for students to engage in social activities, such as informal gatherings, cultural events, and sports. This social engagement is crucial for developing a sense of belonging and community, which are essential components of student satisfaction and wellbeing. Universities must recognize that facilitating these social interactions is as important as academic support in enhancing student engagement.

Acceptance of diversity and intellectual freedom. Furthermore, the acceptance of diverse ideas and beliefs is a pivotal aspect of student engagement. *Students expect to freely express their identities and viewpoints within an inclusive academic community*. This expectation indicates the necessity for universities to cultivate environments that encourage open dialogue and respect for diverse perspectives. Promoting intellectual freedom and critical thinking not only enriches the educational experience but also prepares students to navigate a diverse and interconnected world. Addressing these aspects is vital for fostering an engaged and intellectually vibrant student body.

Geographical and environmental challenges. The geographical and social context of the university also plays a pivotal role in student engagement. *The unique challenges posed by the terrain and climate of Rize, as well as the conservative attitudes of the local population, impact students' daily lives and interactions. Addressing these challenges requires innovative urban planning strategies and efforts to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students in terms of student engagement*. Additionally, the limited social and cultural opportunities in Rize compel students to seek activities in nearby cities. It underscores the need for investment in local amenities to enhance the student engagement.

In summary, student engagement is influenced by a complex interplay of expectations, social environment, and geographical context. Universities must be mindful of these

factors and actively work to create an inclusive, supportive, and dynamic environment that meets the diverse needs and expectations of their students.

4.1.1.2.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

The findings reveal several key points related to academic engagement within a university setting, highlighting the importance of academic staff, teaching methods, infrastructure, resources, and academic culture. These factors are crucial in shaping the student experience and their academic engagement with the university.

Academic staff. The quality and stability of academic staff play a significant role in academic engagement. The presence of talented and well-educated faculty members initially impressed students, as these professors often brought global perspectives and expertise. However, the frequent departure of such high-caliber staff members for better opportunities in more developed regions led to a sense of instability and disengagement among students. This turnover often left students feeling fortunate for the exposure but also deprived of consistent mentorship and academic guidance. The ability of professors to communicate effectively and build rapport outside of the classroom was also highlighted as a critical factor in engaging learning environment. *Professors with high quality background and education is crucial for academic engagement. Also, those with an open-door policy and balanced professional distance with approachability significantly enhanced academic engagement*.

Impact of political ideologies. The impact of political ideologies within the academic environment emerged as a double-edged sword. While some students appreciated the diversity of thought, others felt alienated by the dominance of specific ideologies. This ideological dominance often discouraged open dialogue and critical thinking. *Students who perceived a strong alignment between their beliefs and those of their professors felt more academic engagement. However, those with differing views often experienced low academic engagement.* The presence of pronounced ideological stances among faculty members can therefore significantly impact academic engagement, either positively or negatively, depending on the alignment of beliefs.

Teaching methods. The alignment between academic expertise and the courses taught is critical for academic engagement. *Mismatches between professors' specializations and their assigned courses often resulted in less effective teaching, thus affecting*

academic engagement. Additionally, the heavy workload and intense pacing of courses sometimes overwhelmed students, particularly when exacerbated by the pandemic. This highlights the need for a balanced and considerate approach to curriculum design and delivery. Practical and hands-on learning opportunities such as labs and internships were particularly valued for enhancing theoretical understanding and maintaining academic engagement.

Infrastructure and resource allocation. Adequate infrastructure and access to resources are fundamental to academic engagement. Well-equipped laboratories, modern facilities, and sufficient technological support were seen as crucial for students, particularly in science and engineering disciplines. However, limitations in these areas, especially during the pandemic, hindered effective learning and academic engagement. The lack of access to up-to-date materials and international resources further exacerbated these challenges. *Students noted the importance of diverse and current academic materials to stay engaged and informed*. The reliance on outdated or culturally narrow resources limited their academic development and global perspective.

Academic culture. The overall academic culture and its alignment with promotional claims also influence academic engagement. *Discrepancies between the university's advertised image and the actual student experience led to disengagement.* The perceived lack of genuine support for internationalization efforts and limited opportunities for language learning and cultural exchange affect academic engagement. Students valued the idea of a supportive and dynamic academic culture that promotes inclusivity and critical thinking. *However, when their experiences did not match these ideals, their engagement suffered*.

In summary, the descriptive findings underscore the multifaceted nature of academic engagement. Academic engagement is influenced by academic staff quality, teaching methods, infrastructure, and the broader academic culture. Universities need to address these areas holistically to foster a more engaging educational experience for their students. By aligning faculty expertise with course content, providing robust infrastructure and resources, and cultivating an inclusive and dynamic academic culture, universities can enhance academic engagement and overall satisfaction.

4.1.1.2.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

The findings identify several critical themes related to psychological engagement among university students. They highlight the nuances of individual autonomy, family dynamics, exam stress, emotional turmoil, and navigating interpersonal conflicts. These factors collectively shape the psychological engagement of students in their university life.

Individual autonomy and responsibility. University life marks a significant transition from adolescence to adulthood, where students experience a shift in responsibilities. Initially, many students struggle with managing daily tasks such as cooking, laundry, and handling illnesses, which were previously managed by their families. Over time, however, they develop practical skills and learn to manage their responsibilities independently. This newfound autonomy is crucial for their personal growth and prepares them for professional life. *The development of self-reliance and decision-making skills is a significant aspect of their psychological engagement, as they move from dependence on their families to making independent choices and managing their own lives*.

Family dynamics and their varied impacts. Family influence plays a complex role in students' psychological engagement. While some students feel empowered by the distance from their families, allowing for more independent decision-making. On the other hand, others struggle with the residual impact of deeply ingrained family values and expectations. The transition to university life exposes them to diverse perspectives. It seems to challenge their pre-existing beliefs and promoting a more inclusive mindset. However, the strong attachment to familial values can create internal conflicts and cognitive dissonance, especially when encountering differing viewpoints. *The balance between maintaining family ties and embracing new ideas is a critical factor in their psychological engagement*.

Exam stress. Exam stress is a prevalent issue among university students, significantly affecting their psychological engagement. The pressure to perform well, fear of failure, and high academic expectations contribute to heightened stress levels. This stress is compounded by tight schedules and limited preparation time. It forces students to manage extensive course material within constrained periods. *The fear of academic*

probation or delayed graduation exacerbates their anxiety. This pervasive stress impacts their ability to engage fully in their academic and social lives. This finding highlights the need for effective stress management strategies and support systems to enhance their overall wellbeing and psychological engagement.

Emotional turmoil and isolation. The transition to university can be emotionally challenging, particularly for students moving away from their home regions. *The struggle to form lasting friendships and the instability of social groups are related psychological engagement*. The prevalence of superficial and opportunistic friendships further complicates their social experiences, leading to betrayal and disengagement These emotional challenges underscore the importance of supportive networks and resources to help students navigate their social relationships and maintain psychological wellbeing. *Developing meaningful connections and finding emotional support are crucial for mitigating feelings of isolation and enhancing psychological engagement*.

Navigating interpersonal conflicts. According to descriptive findings, interpersonal conflicts are an inevitable part of psychological engagement. Students often rely on their friends for emotional support and guidance. The absence of family means that close friends become primary sources of comfort and advice during difficult times. This reliance on peer support underscores the importance of strong and supportive friendships in psychological engagement. *Friends provide emotional solace, offer different perspectives, and help navigate challenges. It highlights the multifaceted role of friendships in psychological engagement.* The ability to manage conflicts and seek support from peers is essential for fostering psychological engagement.

In summary, the findings illustrate that psychological engagement among university students is influenced by a combination of individual autonomy, family dynamics, exam stress, emotional challenges, and interpersonal relationships. Addressing these areas holistically can enhance students' psychological wellbeing and engagement in their university life. By fostering environments that support autonomy, provide stress management resources, and encourage meaningful social connections, universities can significantly improve the psychological engagement and success of their students.

4.1.1.2.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

The findings identify several key themes related to social engagement among university students. They focus on campus life, inactive student clubs, and challenges in student relationships and communication. These factors collectively shape the social engagement of students within the university setting.

Campus life. The physical layout and amenities of the campus significantly influence social engagement among students. At RTEU, the geographical constraints of the Rize region result in compact and uneven campus layouts. This lack of accessible and well-designed areas for social interaction can reduce opportunities for students to engage with one another outside the classroom. *Additionally, the division of faculties into separate campuses exacerbates the sense of engagement, particularly for those in smaller or more remote locations*. For example, the students from the Education Faculty expressed a feeling of disconnection from the main campus. *Their social experiences are felt like continuing high school rather than enjoying a vibrant university life*. Enhancing social amenities and integrating more inclusive social activities across all campuses could foster a stronger sense of community and social engagement among students.

Inactive student clubs. The presence of numerous student clubs at the university does not necessarily translate into active social engagement. Many of student clubs struggle with limited participation and budget constraints. It hinders their ability to organize meaningful activities. *This lack of active engagement in student clubs can diminish students' opportunities for social interaction, collaboration, and personal development*. Moreover, the clustering of clubs in specific areas can lead to isolated interactions. Addressing these challenges by providing better support, resources, and promotional efforts for student clubs can enhance their activity levels. It contributes to a more dynamic and engaging campus environment.

Challenges in student relationships and communication. *Social engagement is also affected by the cultural and political homogeneity among the student population*. In Rize, the dominant local culture and political views can make it difficult for students from diverse backgrounds to freely express their opinions and feel accepted. This environment can lead to feelings of disengagement, particularly for those who hold

minority views. The pressure to conform and the fear of judgment from peers and faculty can stifle open dialogue and limit the diversity of thought. *Enhancing inclusivity and promoting a culture of open-mindedness and respectful discourse is essential for fostering a socially engaging university environment*. For example, some students reported feeling judged based on their attire or religious practices, indicating a need for greater acceptance of diversity within the campus community.

In summary, the findings highlight that social engagement among university students is shaped by the physical campus environment, the activity level of student clubs, and the dynamics of student relationships and communication. To improve social engagement, universities should focus on living campuses, supporting active student clubs, and fostering an open and accepting campus culture.

4.1.1.2.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

The findings highlight significant challenges affecting student engagement at the university, particularly related to financial difficulties and budget management, challenging accommodation conditions, and differences in nutrition accessibility.

Financial difficulties and budget management. *Financial constraints are a critical barrier to student engagement*. Many students reported severe economic hardships, unable to allocate funds for leisure activities or even cover basic living expenses. *This economic strain not only limits their participation in extracurricular activities but also adds substantial stress. It affects their academic performance and overall engagement.* The disparity between the financial support available to previous generations and the current students exacerbates this issue. The findings emphasize the need for targeted financial aid and support systems to alleviate these burdens and enhance student engagement.

Challenging accommodation conditions. Accommodation conditions significantly impact students' comfort and ability to focus on their studies. Students residing in family homes reported higher comfort levels due to personalized spaces and greater autonomy. *In contrast, those in dormitories, particularly first-time boarders, faced difficulties adapting to shared living spaces, leading to stress and disengagement.* The geographical distribution of dormitories also presented challenges, with male students

often facing longer commutes. Addressing these accommodation issues by improving dormitory conditions and ensuring equitable access can create a more supportive living environment. It promotes better engagement and satisfaction.

Differences in nutrition accessibility. *The availability and quality of food options also play a crucial role in student engagement*. While the university cafeteria received positive feedback for its quality and affordability, *the dining experiences in government-provided KYK dormitories were less satisfactory*. *Students frequently encountered issues with limited variety, small portion sizes, and the necessity to spend additional money to meet their nutritional needs.* These challenges highlight the importance of improving food services in dormitories to ensure students have access to nutritious and sufficient meals. It is essential for maintaining their health and engagement.

In summary, addressing the financial, housing, and nutritional challenges faced by students is vital for engaging university environment. By providing adequate financial support, improving housing conditions, and enhancing food accessibility, universities can significantly improve student engagement. It can lead to better academic outcomes and overall student wellbeing.

4.1.1.2.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

The findings reveal a significant dimension on political engagement among university students. Political engagement is related to the close ties between university administration and local government bodies. Besides, bureaucratic fatigue and need for active student participation in university governance are interpreted under political engagement.

Need for collaboration between university administration and local government bodies. One of the primary areas of concern is the necessity for collaboration between university administration and local government bodies. Students expressed the need for better cooperation to enhance social amenities on campus, which are currently limited by geographical constraints. They suggested that the university should work with the municipality to improve transportation and develop more social spaces. *Collaboration between political bodies and students is seen as vital to enriching the*

student engagement. Such initiatives could significantly improve the quality and availability of cultural and recreational activities, thereby fostering a more engaging and vibrant university life.

Bureaucratic fatigue. Another critical aspect is the exhaustion caused by bureaucratic processes within the university environment. Students frequently encounter fatigue and frustration due to the lengthy and complicated administrative procedures required for organizing events and activities. *The necessity to navigate through layers of bureaucracy for approvals and the inflexible nature of these processes decrease student engagement*. This bureaucratic fatigue highlights a significant barrier to political engagement, as it drains the energy and motivation of students. It makes active participation of students in university governance and extracurricular activities more challenging.

Need for active student participation in university governance. According to findings, active student participation in university governance is crucial for student engagement. *Students feel underrepresented in decision-making and want a larger role in shaping university policies. Creating student-led committees and improving communication with administrators can help bridge this gap in terms of student engagement.* Encouraging active involvement fosters ownership and responsibility. It can lead to meaningful changes that better align the university with student needs and aspirations.

In summary, the research underscores the importance of political engagement among university students. It underlines the need for collaboration with local government, addressing bureaucratic hurdles, and promoting active participation in university governance. These steps are crucial for creating a responsive academic environment that supports engagement of students.

4.1.2. Case 2: Adıyaman University (ADYU)

Within-case of ADYU, the findings of ADYU are presented in two distinct ways. In the first part, the collected data are transformed into descriptive findings. In the second part, the researcher provides an interpretation of the data and observations, offering an analytical perspective on the findings.

4.1.2.1.Descriptive Findings of ADYU

Under these six categories, the results of Adıyaman University (ADYU) are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. *The findings of Adıyaman University (ADYU)*

Category	**Sub-themes**
Environment of university	Targeted program for studying Acquiring employability Expectation of rich social environment Expectation of individual development Social limitations of the city Influence of religious cults Newly establishment status of the university
University in terms of academic engagement	Academic staff - *Limited number of academic staff* - *Incompatibility of the academic specializations and the given courses* - *Loss of talented academics* - *Interaction of academics with students* - *Refraining from freely expressing ideas of academics.* Teaching - *Shaping the course contents generally with a focus of theoretical knowledge* - *High permanence in practical-designed courses* - *Use of limited teaching techniques* - *Power of field courses over elective courses* - *Ineffectiveness of online teaching* - *Limited evaluation methods* - *Tendency to cheat in online exams* Infrastructure and resources - *Inadequacy of physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings* - *Inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment* - *Limitations of technological infrastructure*

	- *Need of an extensive library and library services* Academic culture - *Building university life based intensively on academic development* - *The importance of individual effort and potential in academic development* - *Lack of support in career planning and development* - *Challenges in terms of internationalization*
University in terms of psychological engagement	Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities Missing the families Psychological wellbeing Anxiety for the future
University in terms of social engagement	Campus life - *Physical structure of campus* - *Limited social opportunities of campus* - *Satisfaction with Campus security* - *Convenient transportation to campus* Inactive student clubs Struggles in student profiles and relationships
Financial issues, accommodation and nutrition	Financial challenges and budget management Challenging accommodation conditions Differences in nutrition opportunities
University in terms of political engagement	Lack of effort for student growth by university administration Lack of student voice in university decisions Dominance of university administrators in the virtual face of the university.

4.1.2.1.1. Environment of University

Student engagement is significantly influenced by expectations of university students prior to enrollment and the broader context and structure of the university and city. Before stepping onto campus, students form a set of anticipations based on information gathered from various sources. It shapes their initial perception and enthusiasm to university life. These expectations play a crucial role in their overall engagement. Additionally, the contexts of university and city further impact student engagement. Under the theme of environment of university, seven sub-themes are obtained. These seven sub-themes are called (I) targeted program for studying, (II) acquiring employability, (III) expectation of rich social environment, (IV) expectation of individual development, (V) social limitations of the city, (VI) influence of religious cults, and (VII) newly establishment status of the university.

***Targeted program for studying*.** The university entrance process stands out as an important period that determines both the academic success and personal preferences of students. A few of the participants stated that they preferred the departments they did not want because they could not get enough points to enter the departments, they dreamed of due to the central examination system, except for a limited number of departments where recruitment was made based on talent. They said that they reluctantly preferred the departments they currently studied because they thought that preparing for the exam once again would cause both financial and psychological fatigue.

Among the participants of the study, it was found that some students preferred departments that they did not want to study and actually considered the undergraduate program as a stepping stone to other professions such as police or teacher. These students usually made their choices due to factors such as family pressure, social expectations or economic security. As a result, by choosing an undergraduate program that is not suitable for their interests and abilities, individuals prepare the ground for themselves to turn to a different professional field in order to change their careers later on.

Two of the participants stated that although they got the score to enter the department they wanted in the university entrance exam, they were directed to departments they

did not want due to family pressure. These two participants underlined that this situation caused them to have an academically and emotionally challenging experience just starting university. While these participants were dealing with the disappointment of not being able to enter the department they wanted, they also had to struggle with their families' expectations. According to the statements of these participants, it was revealed that families see more guarantee in finding a job in Türkiye and direct their children to fields such as medicine and engineering, where they thought their children could encounter fewer problems in terms of employment. That means these two participants stated that they had to study in a department they did not want, and that both their academic success and personal happiness were disrupted from the beginning of the university life. One of these two participants stated that:

> Because of my father, I am actually studying engineering because of family pressure. I said let me prepare for the university exam for one more year, my psychology would deteriorate. My father said everyone's psychology was broken... While I was studying here, I said I would enroll an associate program from open education. He did not allow it either...No one lives the university of their dreams. I wanted to study nursing or dentistry very much, but I came here by force. I am now junior student and I am at the stage of finishing my university, so I gave up that dream – ADYU3-

Acquiring employability. Some participants expected from the university experience to learn not only to receive information from academics, but also to find knowledge themselves. They desired an environment that provided students with continuous development and learning opportunities that were not limited to conferences. Another important point for these participants was that the university could have a guiding role and prepare students for business life. According to them, the university should teach students how to use resources effectively and connect them with real-world experiences. In addition, it should enable people to develop their cooperation and teamwork skills by providing them with the experience of living together throughout university life for support in their professional life.

Some participants saw university as a step that prepares them for professional life. They emphasized that it should prepare them for the business world and career goals by providing them with practical experiences as well as academic knowledge and skills. They expected that this preparation process would be realized through opportunities such as internship opportunities, collaboration projects and practice-

oriented courses. These some participants thought that, unlike high school, the university would provide opportunities that enable students to transform theoretical knowledge into practical application. In other words, they described it as an important step to prepare universities for the challenges and requirements of professional life.

Expectation of rich social environment. The results of this study revealed that most of the participants wanted to encounter rich social opportunities before stepping into university. It turned out that students dreamed of university life through activities such as sitting collectively on the campus lawns with a friend who plays the guitar, chatting with their friends on various topics, and participating in various activities such as cultural and city trips, theater, and exhibitions. Emphasizing that some participants of ADYU imagine the university experience as a rich social environment that is not limited to just studying, one of the participants stated to be disappointed because it was difficult to find the university social life in foreign TV series and movies. After receiving a more traditional education aiming only increase of academic success during high school years, some participants wanted to deepen in a certain field such as sports and arts and explore their own interests during the transition to university. For example, one participant of the case stated that:

> When we think of a university, academia comes to mind, science comes to mind first and foremost because this is the primary role of the university, but of course it is not limited to this. It is also a cultural field, an artistic field, an area where socialization takes place. In addition to academia and science, it is also an area of interaction with people from different cultures. Because in general, even if you live in the same country, you come together with people who have lived in different cultures, you interact and have the opportunity to get to know them – ADYU6 -

Expectation of individual development. Some participants stated that they expected an experience focused on individual development before stepping into university life. They hoped that the university would provide an environment that would allow them to develop not only academic knowledge but also their personal abilities. In other words, these participants stated that they were looking for an environment where the level of knowledge and education could increase and intellectual and cultural accumulation develop. They believed that university life should aim to contribute to the personal development of individuals and make a positive impact on society and even the world. Another important factor for these students was that they wanted to be

in a freer environment compared to high school. The university should have an atmosphere that directs people to social activities, art, music and other cultural activities. In university environment, students should be provided with opportunities to create added value for themselves because they declared that they were willing and ready to discover themselves and develop their personal talents before coming to university. According to the narratives of the participants of ADYU, university life is not only about academic education, but also should provide the individual with the opportunity to express herself/himself and influence the world. For example, one participant stated that:

> I had expected a critical and debating environment in higher education. Such an environment needs to be created so that the purpose of the university is fulfilled. I think higher education should be a place that the students discover themselves. For example, you cannot say this for secondary education because in secondary education, it is the transfer of prepared knowledge to the student. In higher education, you should expect the student to add something, process it and add something new…Therefore, unfortunately, I think that universities in Tu have turned into a continuation of high school rather than a university - ADYU27 -

Social limitations of the city. With a few exceptions, almost all participants of the research complained about the limited social opportunities of Adıyaman where the university is located. They said that they could not find the things they wanted due to the restrictions imposed by being a small city. In general, they stated that the city had an underdeveloped structure and that this situation negatively affected their lives. The participants expressed that the city was inadequate in terms of socialization, especially in terms of cultural events, entertainment venues and social activities, and emphasize that this situation negatively affected their quality of life and social experiences. According to them, while this situation shapes students' life and university experience in the city, it is also seen as a reflection of the general economic and social structure of the city.

Influence of religious cults. According to the statements of some participants, religious cults and groups that are influential in the city have a significant impact on the lives of university students. Some of the participants stated that they did not feel very comfortable and that they saw the presence of these groups as a social pressure in the city and later within the university. The participants who felt under the influence of cults and religious groups stated that their freedoms were limited, they felt

restrictions in their social relations, and their individual freedom of expression was restricted. They stated that while this situation negatively affected their social lives and academic performance, it also shaped the balance and relationships within the university. For example, one participant stated that:

> The city people are slowly getting used to university students, the city is not fully accustomed to university students, that's why. There is prejudice against students because there is a dominant religious perspective in the city. They still look at students strangely. Especially students from provinces such as Osmaniye, Adana, Mersin rather than Adıyaman and Urfa, are considered strange by the people of the city. Because we are physically and thoughtfully different from the people here. So this difference, they look at the clothes we wear strangely. Because this is a more conservative city, so they find it a bit strange… They don't criticize directly, but they can express their discomfort with their looks – ADYU19 -

Some participants of the research stated that some views were imposed under the influence of religious cults. These participants said that they did not express their opinions freely and that they felt under pressure, in some cases being censored. They emphasized that, especially due to the influence of religious groups, individuals with different opinions could not express themselves transparently both in the city and within the university. They stated that the existence of cults restricted the participants' personal and social freedoms, making them have difficulty expressing their opinions openly, and that this negatively affected their life experiences in the city and the university. This situation, from the participants' statements, shows that students' social interactions and individual freedoms have been limited by preventing their right to express their identities and thoughts freely. For example, one participant stated that:

> In Adıyaman, there is loyalty to certain religious cults, so they cannot skip that point at the university. I think they are aware of everything, when we make a criticism regarding some issues, they immediately defend religious beliefs and makes their own criticism. When they do it themselves, there is no problem, but when I do it, they immediately defend conservatism and discusses his own thing very well, but he doesn't want you to discuss it. In short, you cannot argue with them – ADYU6 -

Two of the participants said that under the influence of the religious conservative structure, students' ability to spend time together was negatively affected. They underlined that it created significant barriers, especially between male and female students, when it came to organizing social events together. They stated that this

conservative structure limited interaction between genders, leading to the restriction of mixed activities and social interactions. In other words, the restrictions set by social norms and religious beliefs on male and female students coming together and organizing joint activities appear to affect students' social relationships and reduce their opportunities to spend time together.

Newly established status of university. Some participants of the study stated that although they were aware that ADYU was newly established, they kept their expectations low in various fields compared to well-established universities in Türkiye and therefore normalized not being able to find what they were looking for. While some participants acknowledged that the university was still in the process of development socially, they stated that they found it at least academically satisfactory. Students in this group believed that the university would get better over time. On the other hand, some participants thought that there would be no major improvements in terms of dynamics and development of Adıyaman and ADYU. However, there were also those who emphasized the difficulty of accessing the opportunities at well-established universities. These different views show that students have different perspectives about their future while shaping their expectations about the university. For instance, one participant stated that:

> As long as universities continue to be opened like high schools, the quality of the academic personnel to be recruited there will become uncontrollable after a while. I think that if you ask the students at the newly opened universities, which can be considered to be of lower quality, they will say this. Unfortunately, I think that the quality of our university is not in a very good condition, the quality of the academics is not good enough, the achievements of our university are not sufficiently supervised. I remember very well, when I was younger, our relatives who went to university were like scientists. Now going to university is at a point where it can be eliminated without point criteria. This is very sad and universities should not be in this state – ADYU5-

4.1.2.1.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of academic engagement, four sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) academic staff, (II) teaching, (III) infrastructure and resources, and (IV) academic culture.

4.1.2.1.2.1. Academic Staff

In terms of academic staff, the findings of ADYU case can be divided into five parts named as (i) limited number of academic staff, (ii) incompatibility of the academic specializations and the given courses, (iii) loss of talented academics, (iv) interaction of academics with students, (v) refraining from freely expressing ideas of academics.

Limited number of academic staff. Some participants underlined the insufficient number of academics at the universities they studied at. Although many universities have been opened in Türkiye, they have drawn attention to the problems of universities in training sufficient faculty members. They complained that due to the lack of sufficient number of faculty members, the same academics took many courses and this increased their workload, and they stated that they heard from the faculty members' own words that they could not show adequate performance. Some participants also stated that although some courses were opened under the names of academic members, these academics could not be involved in the course teaching process in the academic period, and instead research assistants taught the courses. Although the research assistants tried during the course, some participants said that they were inadequate in terms of course content in some subjects. This situation revealed that students were not able to receive the quality education they expected from courses, and faculty members were experiencing difficulties with their workload and performance. The participants said that it would be important for their universities to strengthen their teaching staff and increase the quality of courses. For example, one participant stated that:

> There are deficiencies in terms of academic staff in Adıyaman. I can easily say this because our university is new, our department is new and the number of educated lecturers is already low across Türkiye. Adıyaman has this problem, the resource problem, that is, the human resource problem. Due to the disadvantage of being a new university, I can say that it is not at a sufficient level in terms of academic competence - ADYU20 -

Incompatibility of the academic specializations and the given courses. When the opinions of the undergraduate students of ADYU regarding the learning and teaching process were evaluated, they generally stated that they found the instructors inadequate in terms of course content and conceptualization because some of the courses in the program did not match with their academic expertise. In other words, some

participants at the university complained about faculty members not attending classes in their fields of expertise due to the inadequacy of academic staff. These ADYU participants stated that the faculty members who teach in their field of specialization offer a more effective and efficient flow, and the faculty members who do not teach in their field of specialization reflect this situation to them in a negative way. They think that the process does not progress in a theory-based way, and that it does not give them the opportunity to gain enough experience for the practices they will carry out in the field after graduating from the university. According to them, this situation caused students to be deprived of the expert opinion and guidance they expect from courses. Most of participants wanted to have a more in-depth learning experience by taking courses from a faculty member who specializes in their field. However, the inadequacy of academic staff prevented these expectations from being met. For example, two participants stated that:

> If I speak for my own education, pharmacy is such an in-between department, neither biology nor chemistry. Our instructors are generally not from pharmacy, but they are either from biology or chemistry, so I think they cannot reduce the content of the courses to the field of pharmacy and they give a wide range – ADYU5-

> The lecturers teach according to their own minds while teaching, for example, the lecturer explains the course on gynecology, but actually works as a research assistant in the field of pediatrics, but she enters our gynecology class. She does not know anything at our level. She just reads and passes the topics from the slide. This creates a learning gap…He reads and passes the same as what is in the book. She does not provide any additional information, on the contrary, there is incomplete information because she has never seen that course – ADYU4 -

Loss of talented academics. Research participants of ADYU stated that there were situations such as qualified and experienced faculty members working temporarily and then leaving the university. Some participants thought that talented faculty members were not permanent and that they experienced losses in the quality of education and training after they left from the university. They said that this situation caused students to generally experience a lack of stability and long-term guidance in the learning process. In other words, participants underlined that the departure of talented and qualified faculty members negatively have affected students' academic development and learning experiences.

Some participants of this study observed that the exception of the few talented academics who remained at ADYU was due to the fact that they were local people of Adıyaman. They pointed out that this situation was based entirely on luck, and emphasized that otherwise other qualified and talented academics transferred to other universities when they found better opportunities. In this scope, one participant stated that:

> The increase in the number of universities may be perceived positively by some, but there is also a lack of qualified teaching staff at our universities. Therefore, in the academic field, let's say in terms of academic staff, there is a lack of qualified lecturers, I can easily say this in Adıyaman...Students in small provinces like Adıyaman cannot get education that students in well-established universities get. For example, you cannot bring very good lecturers to a university in these small provinces. When we add these together, you cannot get what you want in terms of academic productivity here – ADYU9-

In particular, they said that foreign-educated academic staff or the academics graduated from well-known universities of Türkiye who teach efficiently and effectively leave the university after completing their compulsory service. Participants stated that these faculty members saw Adıyaman as a stopping point and left the institution when they found a job in a different place. While they considered themselves lucky to be able to take courses from these faculty members, they felt unlucky because of the lack of continuity due to the loss of these talented faculty members. For example, one participation stated that:

> In terms of academic career, well-educated academics prioritize the universities in big cities. Because the academics also want to print the universities that we can count as major in Türkiye on their CVs while determining their dreams. But I think they probably don't want a work experience at a university in the small provinces. I think their preferences also affect the situation.

***Interaction of academics with students*.** There were various opinions among the participants of the research that academic staff had different approaches to dealing with students' problems. While some participants of ADYU stated that their instructors dealt with students' problems and offered support during the lessons, others stated that this support was limited. In particular, it has been revealed that while some academics have interacted with students in the classroom and try to find solutions to their problems, other teachers tend to just lecture and leave and do not care about students'

personal problems. These students stated that some instructors acted only in the mode of doing their own course duties and neglected to deal with students' problems, thoughts and beliefs.

On the other hand, some of the research participants stated that they had positive experiences in being able to easily ask questions to their instructors and go to their office rooms for consultation. The expressions of some participants od ADYU revealed that the academic staff's open-door policy facilitated communication and supported the learning process. According to these participants, this approach has helped students solve their academic problems and understand them better, while also strengthening student-instructor interaction. The participants' such positive experiences showed that the learning environment at the university was supportive and collaborative.

At the same time, research participants emphasized that instructors' approaches to communication with students might differ in and outside the classroom. It has been observed that some academics displayed a patronizing and egoistic attitude towards students in the classroom. However, outside the classroom, it was stated that the same academics were more open to communication with students and interacted sincerely. Despite their authoritarian stance in the classroom, it has been observed that academic staff established a closer and more supportive relationship with their students outside the classroom. This reflects that the academics adopted different communication approaches in different environments and established more intimate relationships with students outside the classroom. For example, one participant stated that:

> The professors have a slightly insulting attitude towards the students while they are lecturing in the classroom, but when you go and sit with them after the class is over, they become like a parent to you, they give you that sincerity – ADYU15 -

Refraining from freely expressing ideas of academics. Various narratives emerged among some participants of the research, especially students studying in departments related to social sciences, regarding their experiences regarding academics' in-class comments. Some participants of ADYU emphasized that faculty members could not express their ideas and thoughts freely. It has been stated that the instructors in social sciences avoid expressing their political views and avoid political comments while

explaining the topics. This situation reveals that students, especially in courses in fields such as public administration and political science, have had difficulty in meeting the expectations of associating and discussing the theoretical framework with current political issues. The participants underlined to seek a certain level of freedom in the classroom environment to understand and interpret current issues, exchange ideas and even discuss. However, they stated that they could not find such interactions in the classroom environment due to faculty members' reservations about these issues. This emphasizes the importance of a more open and free discussion environment in the classroom to enrich students' academic experiences and enable them to address current issues more deeply.

4.1.2.1.2.2. Teaching

In terms of teaching, the findings of ADYU case can be divided into seven parts named as (i) shaping the course contents generally with a focus of theoretical knowledge, (ii) high permanence in practical-designed courses, (iii) use of limited teaching techniques, (iv) power of field courses over elective courses, (v) ineffectiveness of online teaching, (vi) limited evaluation methods, and (vii) tendency to cheat in online exams

Shaping the course contents generally with a focus on theoretical knowledge. The complaints were being expressed among participants of ADYU due to the fact that the courses have been mainly theoretically focused. The participants stated that theoretical knowledge has challenged the learning process and that they have not given enough guidance on how to use it in the research and practice fields. Although most of participants were aware of the importance of theoretical knowledge, they generally felt lacking in how to apply this knowledge in practice.

Most of the participants especially complained that the theoretical topics in the courses were not supported with concrete examples and that they could not develop a clear understanding of how to use them in the real-world contexts. For example, lack of clarity on how to use the theoretical principles taught in an engineering course to solve engineering problems encountered in real life puts students in a difficult situation. Similarly, medical students do not receive adequate guidance on how to translate the

theoretical knowledge they acquire in clinical courses into practice when interacting with patients.

Due to the course contents designed based on theoretical knowledge, the participants were worried that it might be difficult for them to develop their professional skills and abilities and to adapt to business life after graduation. Some participants thought that more opportunities and support should be provided so that they can transform the theoretical knowledge transferred to them into practical applications.

High permanence in practical-designed courses. Some of the research participants stated that there were a limited number of applied courses at the university. They emphasized that this situation caused students not to have an effective learning experience. Some of the participants thought that they have missed the opportunity to simulate or experience situations they may encounter in real life, especially when theoretical knowledge was not translated into practice. They stated that limited applied course opportunities might negatively affect their preparation for business life after graduation and prevent them from developing their skills.

Some participants also shared their experiences observed in a limited number of practical-oriented courses. When these experiences evaluated themselves academically, they stated that they experienced more permanent learning compared to other courses. These participants of ADYU stated that in applied courses, they had the opportunity to directly transform theoretical knowledge into practical applications and thus, they understood the subjects more deeply. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think we need more practical courses. We need to be doing something, not just seeing and looking at the photo. I think it will stay in my mind more when I make applications about this subject in the class, when I experience it myself, when I solve it myself. As I said, we do practices in the anatomy class. They even make us do extra practices. The things I learned there are in my mind, look, even though so much time has passed, I still remember them, but if you ask me to tell you something from the class I just took, I can't tell you anything – ADYU7 -

In particular, they emphasized that their learning experiences were more effective when they had the chance to simulate situations they might encounter in real life. This shows that some participants were more motivated to improve their ability to use

knowledge in real life. As a result, the participants suggested that while designing the department courses, the number of practical-oriented courses should be increased, for they contributed to the long-lasting learning process of students.

Use of limited teaching techniques. According to the findings of the research, it has been revealed that the methods used by academic staff while teaching courses affected the students' perspective on the courses. The students participating in the research stated that the majority of faculty members preferred lecturing than other teaching strategies and methods and that they usually lectured on slides they had prepared in advance. In fact, participants stated that some instructors read directly from the slides or the course book they recommended, without adding to the slides or the book. This situation caused them to question the role of the academics in the classroom. Some of the students stated that this style of lecture reduced interaction and made the course boring. They also said that the instructors who lecture in a monotonous voice distract the students' attention.

On the other hand, some participants emphasized that some instructors achieved more effective communication by changing their tone of voice in the classroom. In particular, they stated that faculty members who create a livelier atmosphere by lowering and raising their voices during the lecture attract students' attention better. That means the participants have expected a more interactive, interpretation-oriented and discussion-oriented learning experience in lectures, rather than just content read directly from the slides. They also demanded that the subjects were not only taught in lessons, but also that an environment be created that would allow students to express their ideas and discuss the subjects in depth.

The participants in medical faculties stated that slides have become the main source for lectures. The participants studying in health sciences such as medicine, pharmacy and nursing and social sciences stated that the slides were useful for them because the recommended resources in the courses were very long and detailed. For example, the participants from health-oriented faculties underlined that they covered almost 150-200 pages of slides in each course hour, which was challenging for studying although they are shorted and summarized version of main course books. However, these participants stated that they could find the opportunity even when they wanted to ask

questions in critical situations. Especially medicine and pharmacy participants underlined that long and detailed course books made learning difficult, but that the slides present information in a more condensed and focused way made the study process easier. Emphasizing that slides are an important tool in the study process, students stated that in this way, they could access course materials more effectively and make the learning process more efficient.

Most of the participants from the Faculty of Education stated that few of instructors used relatively different teaching strategies. However, they still stated that the majority preferred lecturing and slides like in other faculties. Unlike students in other faculties, some instructors distributed the topics to be taught at the beginning of the academic term to student groups or students individually and have not taken enough responsibility in the lectures. Education faculty participants stated that they prepared for the course during the weeks when the faculty member in charge of the course was assigned themselves to lecture or make a presentation. In other weeks, they stated that their classmates who took responsibility for the course were not interested in the course content and presentation. This shows that students have focused only on fulfilling their own duties and avoided taking responsibility for the efficiency of the course in the other weeks. Because they thought that what their classmates explained them might not convey the essence of the subject sufficiently, they thought that the lessons are inefficient. The participants of faculty of education who complained about the instructors not taking enough responsibility in this course, thought that this method has contributed a little to their teaching skills, but they thought that they have not learned enough in terms of course content.

Power of field courses over elective courses. Some participants of the study stated that they attached more importance to the field courses they took at the university and that they gave more priority to these courses because they thought they would contribute more to their future lives. In addition, they stated that they thought that Ataturk's principles and reforms and Turkish language and literature courses as compulsory common courses by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) were unnecessary because their contents were no different from the high school and secondary school curricula.

Some participants also emphasized that the elective and supportive courses offered to them by their departments did not attract their attention because they were more like compulsory electives and were not related to their fields. These participants considered the courses they took outside the field as an unnecessary waste of time and could not understand the reason for the existence of these courses. They especially thought that courses outside their field were unconnected with their career goals and areas of expertise. They stated that these courses prevented them from focusing on areas where they could use their time and energy more efficiently. While participants believed that courses taken at the university should contribute to the personal and professional development of students, they thought that courses outside the field did not meet this expectation. Therefore, they emphasized to have difficulty understanding the reason for the existence of these courses and not to interested in them further. These participants thought that such compulsory courses wasted their time and energy, as they wanted to specialize in more fields during their university education and acquired knowledge and skills for their careers. For instance, one participant from engineering faculty expressed in the following way:

> We need to watch the common courses such as literature and history on the system within a week and the exams are online...The subjects we have seen for how many years, we have studied these subjects over and over again for years. In addition, they are not related to our department, there is no need, I think it is a complete waste of time, it would be much better for me to go and give it to software course – ADYU1 -

Ineffectiveness of online teaching. With the transition to online teaching during the pandemic period, most of the participants stated that classes were inefficient. These participants stated that the interaction they had with students in face-to-face instruction, albeit partially, was completely lost in the online teaching period due to the inadequacy of the infrastructure system. They stated that they turned off their images and sounds due to the problems in the infrastructure system and only the instructor was active for lecturing the subject. The participants stated that it was inefficient to teach the lessons one-sidedly, with only the instructor being active, and that listening to lectures in front of the computer for a long time was difficult to pay attention to, as in the classroom, and that they had difficulty concentrating. For this reason, they stated that they did not attend the classes and that they only turned on the computer during the synchronized class hours, connected to the class, and then closed

the screen and dealt with other things, in order to avoid the problem of absenteeism. For example, one participant stated that:

> When we take the courses online, we don't enter them much, I didn't watch these courses much because I wouldn't understand much even if I watched them. There are videos on YouTube that I can watch the same if I open them. Face-to-face courses are better, I get more efficiency because after a while in front of the computer, people can get sleepy. In an online class, for example, you can deal with your phone, your attention can be distracted elsewhere, you can open it there and deal with something else, but in a face-to-face class, there is no such thing, you listen there, but when you open the video, it is monotonous there, people don't care much, personally, I turn on the computer just to make it look like that course has been watched – ADYU2 -

They stated that they could not find learning-supporting elements such as gestures and facial expressions in the classroom environment in online courses, and that faculty members had difficulty in monitoring the student's learning status. They also stated that they could not adequately use elements that support student motivation in the classroom management techniques they applied in the classroom. These findings clearly reveal the difficulties experienced by students during the online teaching process and the lack of interaction negatively affects the learning experience. For example, one participant stated that:

> Online information transfer can be relatively affordable, but in return, an instructor-student relationship is also required. I can say that physical communication is really necessary. Although we can say that distance education is better than nothing during the pandemic period, I think it is definitely not a substitute for taking classes in the classroom. The issue is not only the transfer of information, people can meet this in some way, but the eye contact of an instructor with the student in the classroom can focus even a distracted student on the lesson – ADYU10 -

In addition, the participants' statements on the negative effects of not being able to take courses that required practice and laboratory during the online teaching period were noteworthy. Some participants indicated that the lack of such courses negatively affected their learning experience. Particularly faculty participants in engineering, medicine, education and other technical fields underlined that practical application and laboratory experience had an important place in professional development. They stated that the failure to take these courses online caused students to lose the opportunity to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. For example, one participant from nursing stated that:

> In the online period, we had problems in applied courses, even when we are face to face, there are problems in the transfer of information between us. After all, nursing is a job based on practice and when we say nursing, practice is important. Theoretically, we may be a little more knowledgeable than other universities, but we are far behind in practice in online period - ADYU4 -

They thought that this situation made the participants think that it could prevent them from developing their professional skills. Also, it could cause them to be unprepared for the practical problems they would encounter in their business lives after graduation. Additionally, it can be inferred that the lack of laboratory experiences negatively affected students' academic performance and motivation. Some participants also stated that giving these courses online with only theoretical framework or with a limited demo by the instructor might prevent some subjects from being fully understood and in-depth learning. Therefore, the lack of courses requiring practice and laboratory during the online education period causes anxiety and dissatisfaction among students.

Additionally, there were some participants who complained about not being compensated for their practice courses after the online teaching period ended. The fact that no appropriate planning was made for compensation or experience gain during the summer period, when the online teaching process was flexible, created disappointment and dissatisfaction among students according to the statements of these participants. They were concerned about the impact of the lack of these courses on their post-graduation careers and worried that not gaining the necessary skills and knowledge might negatively affect their future job performance. One participant from pharmacy department stated that:

> When I think in terms of the university's own education, we are a laboratory-oriented department. Some of us are students whose studentship coincided the pandemic period, so it was insufficient in every way. Some universities tried to complete their application deficiencies in the form of videos. Obviously, our university did not put much effort into this. They did not try to solve the laboratory deficiencies much, especially in some universities, they offered the opportunity to repeat these practical-oriented courses in the summer, but we did not do that either – ADYU5-

A notable finding emerged from several participants regarding university students' experiences of online teaching during the pandemic. According to these findings, it was argued that some of the non-practice-oriented courses could be given online during the normal teaching process which could be even be more effective. They stated

that the content and structure of some courses were suitable for online teaching. For example, a participant at the faculty of education stated that holding some sessions of instructional technology courses online could make the course more effective. It was thought that this might provide students with a more flexible learning environment and easier access to course materials. It was suggested that it might increase students' freedom to examine course materials and manage the learning process at their own pace and in their preferred time periods. These findings suggest that online teaching methods can be integrated into traditional classroom courses and, in some cases, provide a more effective learning experience.

As stated, some students have had difficulty understanding the subjects or having difficulty following the lessons in the courses given during the online period. The students participating in the research stated that they experienced subject deficiencies and could not follow some courses due to the difficulties brought by the online environment. This situation became even more evident, especially when some instructors noticed that students did not grasp the subjects during the online period. According to the research, some faculty members had to make up in face-to-face classes when they saw that the participants did not understand the topics or had deficiencies. The compensation process occurred because the content of face-to-face courses was related and connected to the subjects covered in the online period. These faculty members had to allocate additional time to cover the missing points in the topics covered during the online period and had to cover new topics in a limited manner. This approach caused students to express that they felt as if they were studying the academic subjects of two years throughout one academic year. These difficulties experienced in the online period affected the learning processes of students and required compensatory work for some of them.

Limited evaluation methods. A few of the participants in this study stated that they observed faculty members paying special attention to student development with their evaluation strategies. Several participants said that their determination to understand their individual needs and support their academic and personal growth was evident through extracurricular and in-class academic activities or counseling processes. They stated that these faculty members, who adopted alternative methods to evaluate student achievements in addition to traditional exams and tests, used methods such as

assignments for critical and reflective thinking, and in-class performance evaluation by creating a classroom environment that fostered discussion. It turned out that participants who experienced these were encouraged to learn in depth.

However, most of the participants stated that the instructors generally preferred to make midterm and final exams in the measurement and grading processes except for the participants of the faculty of medicine. However, one thing to note was that most of these exams were consistently multiple-choice tests and open-ended questions were rare. These participants in the research stated that the instructors generally avoided measuring students with alternative methods and did not use any measurement method other than midterm and final. According to the statements of the participants, this situation shows that opportunities to measure students' ability not only to retrieve rote information but also their in-depth understanding and critical thinking abilities are limited.

The participants of medicine faculty stated that, unlike traditional examination systems, a committee-shaped examination system was adopted. These students stated that committee exams generally included clinical scenarios or case-based questions and tested students' ability to translate their theoretical knowledge into practical applications. According to these participants, committee exams were usually conducted by a committee consisting of faculty members from many different areas of expertise. This committee relied on a standard set of evaluation criteria to evaluate students' performance. They noted that these committee exams provided students with the opportunity to simulate real-world patient care situations and develop clinical practice skills. It was also considered an important tool in providing feedback to students and identifying their deficiencies. However, it was underlined that the preparation process for these committee exams took a lot of time and that studying only during the final week was insufficient.

Some participants in the research from the fields of social sciences and educational sciences stated that faculty members generally relied on the content of the public personnel selection exam (KPSS) when giving lectures and grading processes. In particular, the point that caught the attention of these participants was that the instructors taught lessons by focusing on which topics would appear in this national

exam and highlighted these topics during the assessment and evaluation process. Some students who participated in the research stated that the questions they encountered in the midterm and final exams were similar to the questions in the public personnel selection exam. In fact, some participants said that some instructors declared that they have used same questions appeared in previous public national personnel selection exams or asked questions in similar formats.

According to the participants' statements, this situation caused different reactions among the students. Some students have found this approach to be practical preparation to help them achieve their professional career goals. However, some students criticized the limitation of university education only to the public personnel selection exam and were disturbed by the restriction of academic knowledge to the content of this exam. In particular, these students argued that the university strayed from its general educational purpose and that students should be educated to acquire a broader range of knowledge and skills, not just to pass a particular exam. In conclusion, this reveals that the examination-oriented nature of university education is a controversial issue among students and that there are different perspectives.

In addition to them, some participants called for a greater emphasis on hands-on tasks that go beyond traditional exams and reflect real-world experiences. They stated that applied approaches such as project-based assignments, laboratory studies and field studies would enrich students' learning experiences and enable them to understand concepts in depth by associating them with real-life scenarios. These participants have expected such tasks to be included in the academic performance evaluation process and have been looking for opportunities to demonstrate their skills and creativity rather than exams based only on theoretical knowledge.

Tendency to cheat in online exams. Most of the participants stated that students frequently cheated during midterms and finals during the online teaching period. These participants stated that it was easier to cheat in remote exams and that auditing mechanisms were insufficient. However, they stated that factors such as the difficulty of communicating among students and the fact that students could be easily affected by external factors while preparing for exams at home also increased the tendency to cheat. This finding emphasizes the need to take more effective measures to ensure

exam security and encourage students' ethical behavior during the online teaching period. For example, one participant stated that:

> In the online period, I could not attend most of the classes and I could only take the exams. In that case, I usually cheated, to be honest. Most of those who passed the course already passed with cheating. The academics were also aware of this, a student who never attended the class got 90. For example, now we are taking Ottoman Turkish. During the pandemic period, a student who passed the Ottoman Turkish class with 100 points cannot even write a letter in face-to-face classes...So when we started university, after the pandemic, the academics started to teach the lessons of the pandemic year – ADYU23 -

According to the findings of a study, students' tendency to cheat during the online education period led faculty members to find solutions. Some faculty members tried to solve this problem by increasing the difficulty of the questions compared to face-to-face education. However, it was observed that these changes did not solve the main problem and even caused new problems. As the difficulty of the questions increased, it was revealed that students who did not cheat and behaved ethically were victimized. In particular, there was a feeling of injustice among the students, and students who did not cheat were faced with more difficult questions and believed that a fair examination environment was not provided. This situation prevented students from being motivated and having a fair evaluation process. These findings reveal the need to take more effective and fair measures to solve the problem of cheating in online education, instead of just increasing the difficulty of the questions.

In addition, some participants stated that some instructors asked students to turn on cameras during exams in order to prevent cheating during the online period. However, the participants emphasized that this practice was an unfair approach and stated that students who could not fulfill the condition of turning on the camera because of physical and technological disadvantages could not take the exams and fail their courses. According to them, requiring students to turn on cameras might victimize students who had difficulties in providing equal access and opportunities. In particular, it has been underlined that this practice, which might prevent students who did not have sufficient equipment or who had privacy concerns, from participating in the exams, constituted a situation contrary to the principles of justice and equality. It reveals the need for more careful and comprehensive approaches to taking precautions against cheating in online exams. These findings reveal the need to take more effective

and fair measures to solve the problem of cheating in online exams, instead of simply increasing the difficulty of the questions or requiring cameras to be turned on.

4.1.2.1.2.3. Infrastructure and Resources

In terms of infrastructure and resources, the findings of ADYU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) inadequacy of physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings, (ii) inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment, (iii) limitations of technological infrastructure and (iv) need of an extensive library and library services.

Inadequacy of physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings. With the increase in the number of universities in Türkiye, massification has been experienced. However, parallel to this increase in department quotas in existing universities causes the classes to be taught and the number of chairs in the classes to be insufficient. According to the findings of the research, some participants stated that although the number of students at universities has increased, the infrastructure has not been developed sufficiently and the classrooms cannot keep up with this increase. In other words, some participants stated that the constant increase in department quotas made physical deficiencies more obvious. These participants stated that increasing quotas put a strain on the infrastructure and resources at universities, and that this situation revealed the physical limitations in classrooms. For example, one participant stated that:

> Now you have already seen in our class, I can show you, but this is a high school level class. It is not a lecture hall or a large classroom and we are very crowded, people come to class early to find a seat. And those who can't find a seat, you see, they take chairs from somewhere and sit in the classroom. They take the chairs from the canteen and bring them to the classroom – ADYU4 -

Especially during periods when student population is at its highest, it is possible that lessons cannot be taught efficiently and students have difficulty in concentrating. At the same time, it is also emphasized that due to the insufficient number of classrooms and chairs, students cannot listen to lectures comfortably and have difficulty in participating actively in classes. For this reason, they argued that quota increases should be stopped.

It was determined that among the participants of the research, students studying in faculties of medicine and health sciences faced difficulties due to the lack of faculty buildings. These students stated that they had to share the same buildings with other faculties due to the lack of faculty buildings. For example, it has been observed that health faculty students were allocated to classrooms on some floors in the engineering faculty, and medical faculty students were allocated to classrooms on some floors in the Islamic sciences faculty. This situation stated that the participants of these faculties experienced a lack of belonging due to the lack of an own faculty building. According to them, not having their own faculty buildings caused students to face difficulties in studying, laboratory work and social interactions. It was also stated that since the cultural and academic needs of different faculties were different, common areas were insufficient to meet the needs.

Inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment. Research participants having laboratory courses at ADYU stated that they were satisfied with the practical experiences and interactive learning environment provided by laboratory courses. Most of the participants, especially in engineering and medical faculties, found the laboratories adequate and stated that the devices used were modern and functional.

However, some participants stated that they had great difficulties in completing the applications because some of the devices they used to conduct experiments in the laboratory were broken. In particular, they thought that the malfunction of the devices required to perform a particular experiment prevented them from carrying out the experiments they planned and affects their academic progress. They underlined that the students who experienced this situation could not fully experience the practical experiences they expected from laboratory courses and that their learning processes were inadequate. They stated that the application reports they were required to write after each laboratory course were disrupted, and that they also faced grievances in terms of grading due to incorrect measurements made due to broken devices. They were also very disturbed that this problem was not caused by them but by the faulty measurements of the faulty devices. They also emphasized that delays in the repair or replacement of broken devices negatively affected students' experiences and reduced the efficiency of laboratory courses. Therefore, the need for regular maintenance and

renewal of laboratory infrastructure is important to improve students' educational experiences.

Some of the research participants expressed their grievances, stating that spoiled and expired materials in laboratories cause experiments to fail. This prevented the participants from getting the learning and practical experience they expected from their laboratory experiences. These participants said that, experiments failed to produce expected results, negatively impacting their academic progress. The participants who were victimized stated that they faced loss of time and effort, as well as not being able to obtain an effective learning experience in the laboratory environment. They emphasized the importance of deficiencies and control mechanisms in laboratory management and material supply processes. It reveals that necessary improvements should be made to increase the quality of students' educational experiences**.**

Limitations of technological infrastructure. Most of the research participants of a university stated that they encountered technological infrastructure problems with the transition to online teaching due to the pandemic. Particularly, they underlined the connection problems faced difficulties in attending classes and their friends living in villages had difficulties in accessing the internet. These participants emphasized that this period was not fair. Few participants stated that some students experienced a lack of computers and technological equipment, and that this situation caused disruptions in attending classes online. In addition to the university not having a good technological infrastructure, they stated that the flow of classes could not be ensured due to individual technological problems experienced by students.

Some participants stated that the online teaching period provided more positive contributions to their learning. In particular, they stated that students who could not attend online lessons synchronously had the opportunity to watch these lessons later, thanks to the recording and sharing of the instruction on online platforms. These participants stated that although they watched the lessons synchronously, these recordings helped students learn and comprehend the points they missed or had difficulty understanding by re-listening, and emphasized that the chance to watch again supported their learning process. This shows that students are supported to learn

in accordance with their own learning pace and needs by providing easier access to course materials.

Although universities switched to face-to-face teaching again with the end of the pandemic period, it seems that an approach has been adopted by some courses today. However, it is stated that the practice of recording and sharing the lessons with students, so that they could watch the lessons asynchronously during the pandemic period, has been abandoned. The participants who benefited online teaching effectively expected online courses to be recorded and shared as they were during the pandemic period. They stated that this approach was effective in eliminating students' learning gaps and supported their learning processes by providing easier access to course materials. These expectations of the students point to a thought-provoking point about the need for online learning practices developed during the pandemic period to continue during the face-to-face teaching period.

During the pandemic period, students' encounter with digital platforms for online document sharing and resource sharing made them realize that these platforms were very useful. Some of the participants suggested establishing digital infrastructure systems where students could easily communicate with each other and their instructors and made suggestions, especially during the course. With the digital infrastructure in place, students had the ability to access recordings of previous lectures within the scope of their courses. Moreover, they could engage in resource sharing, track their notes, and upload assignments through these platforms. This technological setup enabled students to have a comprehensive and accessible repository for their academic materials, fostering convenience and efficiency in their learning processes. In this way, they saw that increasing interaction and encouraging cooperation among students would contribute to making the learning process more sustainable. They thought that students' sharing of their knowledge and experiences through digital platforms supported a more effective understanding of the course content and increased learning results. This finding emphasizes the need to organize the online learning and teaching process in accordance with the needs of the students and provide interactive communication opportunities. In this way, it seems that digital infrastructure systems can be an important tool for enriching course content and increasing student interaction in the post-pandemic period.

Need of an extensive library and library services. Although some of the university participants were satisfied with the library services and the resources it contained, the majority of them stated that the library and its content were inadequate to meet the needs of students. These participants underlined the need for library resources and services to be up-to-date and diverse, given the rapidly changing nature of research and learning needs. In other words, they stated that the library's collection was limited and that they had difficulty accessing up-to-date resources. From the participants' statements, it was revealed that they expected improvement and strengthening efforts to be increased so that library services and resources could meet the needs of students more effectively. For example, one participant stated that:

> When you enter a library, I expect a library that will stimulate a huge desire to read because a library is a powerful stimulus. You know, I said that people don't always have that desire to learn something, the desire to learn something, reading, research, etc., but the stimulus triggers the students. There is such a dimension, so even the physical appearance of a university, for example its library, should be in a way that makes people want to read when they see it… When we walk around the campus, we cannot see the library. A library should not be a place to look for and find in a campus. The library should say I am here when you enter the campus.

However, another important finding is that only a few participants were able to comment on access to digital resources. They also stated that they found digital resources sufficient and that they could easily access the resources they were looking for electronically. Many of the participants stated that they were not knowledgeable about digital resources.

Some participants complained about the crowdedness of the library, stating that with the increase in the population of the university, study areas in the library were insufficient and that students had great difficulties in finding suitable areas to study, especially during midterm and final weeks. The participants who both stayed in family homes and dormitories thought that the library offered a quiet and productive working environment. However, they stated that they could not benefit from this advantage sufficiently due to crowding and congestion. They stated that especially during exam periods, the library study areas were crowded and some students could not even find desks to study. They underlined that this situation negatively affected students' study efficiency and academic success. They stated that the university, which tried to solve

this density in the central library by reserving small classrooms in some faculties as study halls for students, was inadequate in this regard. For this reason, library officials are expected to consider solution suggestions such as rebuilding or expanding the library and take steps to provide a study environment that is more suitable for the needs of students.

4.1.2.1.2.4. Academic Culture

In terms of academic culture, the findings of ADYU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) building university life based intensively on academic development, (ii) the importance of individual effort and potential in academic development, (iii) lack of support in career planning and development and (iv) challenges in terms of internationalization.

Building university life based intensively on academic development. There were many participant experiences that the academics at the university only dealt with academic aspects, preventing students from focusing on other areas of development. The results of this study revealed that most of academics focused only on course content and academic success, but were insufficient to support students' personal, social and professional development. Therefore, almost all of the participants stated that this might cause students to focus only on grades and not spend enough time on activities outside of classes. Some of the participants underlined that focusing only on academic success in universities prevents the holistic development of students and emphasized that academic staff and the university should provide a comprehensive student support service.

The importance of individual effort and potential in academic development. The participants of this study who stepped into university often stated that their academic development was different from the previous educational levels. While teachers' guidance and individual monitoring during their high school experiences guide students, their perception that they did not require them to take much responsibility varied in the university environment. At university, although there was guidance from academic staff, these participants felt more responsible for going into details and finding the right resources and study methods. The majority of participants emphasized that their academic development largely depended on individual effort.

They explained that the university has served as a laboratory for students to manage their own learning processes and taken the necessary steps for success, and that success in this environment has been shaped by the students' own motivation, efforts and determination. In this context, the academic development process at the university has revealed its close relationship with students discovering their own potential and making the necessary efforts to maximize this potential. In this framework, one participant stated that:

> I think the academic contribution of the university is not at the desired level. I can say for myself that I think that I have acquired many of the things I have gained academically through my own individual efforts. Of course, the university's directing academic studies was of course effective, I cannot deny that, but I think that many of them are due to students' individual efforts. I think universities have a curve and a graph that is falling more and more in terms of academic satisfaction – ADYU25 -

While some participants thought that they received an education appropriate to their potential, except for all students in the faculties of medicine and pharmacy and some of the participants in the faculty of education, they realized over time that they could not reach the quality of education in well-established universities of Türkiye. These students questioned the quality of the education they have received. On the other hand, some participants seems that they accepted that their personal academic potential was not suitable for receiving education at the level in well-established universities in Türkiye. In this case, there appears to be a significant mismatch between students' educational experiences and expectations.

Lack of support in career planning and development. This research revealed the participants' deficiencies in preparing for their careers. According to the research, most of the participants did not make enough preparations for career planning. In particular, it seems that participants who were active and had close relationships with academic staff were able to obtain more information and consulted about their careers. However, it was determined that participants with relatively weak communication skills were unable to benefit from these opportunities and therefore experienced a lack of counseling and guidance regarding their careers. This finding shows that there is inequality in access to career planning and counseling services among students. It has been emphasized that students who did not have strong communication skills had more

difficulty in receiving guidance and support regarding their careers, and this may negatively affect their career development.

In the study, participants in engineering faculty and social sciences revealed the difficulties they experienced in career planning to different extents. In particular, the students who participated in this research stated that their professors had insufficient knowledge about the field in which they would work after graduation. According to the participants, students experienced deficiencies in the process of determining and developing their career goals after graduation. Insufficient field knowledge of instructors caused students to face difficulties in finding internships and accessing job opportunities suitable for their field of study. For this reason, they stated that it was inevitable for students to experience limitations in their career planning and to have difficulty developing a clear vision of what they would do after graduation.

Additionally, this research revealed that the majority of participants did not have sufficient knowledge about postgraduate education and even students who were close to graduation experience a lack of awareness on this issue. According to the research, participants did not have a clear vision about what path they would follow regarding the postgraduate education process. In particular, it has been determined that even students who were close to graduation did not have sufficient information about how to conduct postgraduate education and its requirements.

It is noteworthy that during a conversation, the participant from a nursing department said that she attracted the attention of an academic thanks to her high-grade point average. Then, this academic played an important role in taking the necessary steps for after undergraduate education. This participant randomly came across the academic's suggestion for postgraduate study in the academic' field of expertise. The academic member approached this suggestion openly and obtained detailed information. The academic helped the nursing participant's preparation process by providing guidance on academic and graduate education entrance exam (ALES). After this process, the same academic encouraged the participant to prepare for national foreign language exams (YDS and YÖKDİL) and emphasized that she should apply to master's programs after graduation. It was observed that the student's awareness

about postgraduate education was shaped by her individual chance and the guidance of the academic she met randomly.

Challenges in terms of internationalization. From the participants' statements, it was observed that some steps were taken in the university's internationalization efforts, but they were generally found to be insufficient. Particularly, most of participants outside the English Language and Literature department felt inadequate in terms of learning foreign languages. They stated that the compulsory English courses of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and foreign language prep school courses were ineffective in providing development in foreign languages and generally passed in an atmosphere of formality. The participants who both wanted to follow international developments professionally and live abroad emphasized that they could not find sufficient foreign language development opportunities.

Some of the participants stated that their universities sent students for exchange through the Erasmus program and that students came from different countries. However, they stated that the number of students attending their universities was limited. Some of the participants observed that they lost their enthusiasm for the Erasmus program due to some negative experiences such as the delay of the graduation time and the lack of equivalence of the courses they would take. Moreover, an English Language and Literature participant criticized the contracted Erasmus universities because their native language was not English. This participant stated that agreements with countries providing education in English should be increased in order to improve their English level. Because the participant thought that she could improve her foreign language level by communicating with the native speakers outside of the university, thanks to collaborations with universities in countries where the native language was English. In short, she emphasized that cooperation should be developed with countries where she could practice foreign languages outside of school.

Another point of criticism is the country profiles of international students coming to ADYU. Some participants stated that most of the international students coming to their universities are from Arab countries and that there are almost no international students from western countries. That means, based on their own observations, these participants stated that there were more students from Arab countries than from other

nations. Additionally, from the participants' statements, one of research finding emerged that Syrian students studying as refugees in Türkiye were described as international students by the university and these international students generally spent time among themselves and did not interact with other students at the university according to observations of some participants. Therefore, these participants stated that this situation means that the opportunity to meet and interact with different cultures was limited, and international students generally spend time among themselves and were isolated in group work.

Some participants of the university stated that they would like to take courses from international professors. The participants who wanted to meet with world-leading professors in their fields, listen to their ideas and interact, stated that the university has not taken any studies or steps in this regard. However, they stated that these opportunities could be created at least in online environments. These participants thought that it was possible to benefit from these opportunities through organizing online courses or seminars with international professors, using virtual interaction platforms or distance education programs. This situation emphasizes the importance of universities taking steps to support international collaborations and providing students with international experience.

4.1.2.1.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of psychological engagement, four sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities, (II) missing the families, (III) psychological wellbeing and (IV) anxiety for the future.

Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities. Most of the participants defined the university experience as a transition from adolescence to adulthood. University was seen as a period when young people felt more independent, could make their own decisions and developed their life skills. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think university is the most important period that will affect your future life, where you will leave behind that adolescence in high school and take yourself to another level, whether it is in terms of mindset or learning new things. When

> we were in high school, the teachers would say that you will gain the most beautiful ages of your life and the most mature experiences at university. I really feel that when I am studying at university – ADYU10 -

Most of the participants stated that when they started university, they encountered a new experience with many responsibilities and freedom that they were not used to before. During this period, they stated that they felt more adult as family pressure decreased and they started to direct their own lives. They thought that this period was an important milestone in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, as the university environment contributed to the personal, academic and social development of young people. Therefore, the university experience was often seen as a period in which young people found their own identity and shape their future lives by most of the participants.

As mentioned above, the participants of the study talked about a series of experiences of freedom and responsibility in their university life. However, it was observed that there were differences between the participants who lived in family homes and those who lived in student housing or dormitories. The participants living in dormitories or student homes reported that they felt freedom to plan their own affairs without pressure and to organize their daily routines as they wished. In particular, they stated that being able to determine their personal time, such as meal times and sports activities, enabled them to see themselves as adults. The responsibilities they took on in terms of undertaking household chores and being economically independent strengthened their sense of being able to stand on their own feet as individuals.

In addition, the process of coping with the problems they faced when they were alone at home helped them to have confidence in their own abilities and autonomy in their own affairs. The increased physical distance between them and their families made some participants' families value them more and helped them feel more independent. These experiences emphasize the freedom participants gained during their university life and their ability to successfully manage their responsibilities. This enabled them to stand on their own feet personally and economically and to strengthen their sense of adulthood.

A noteworthy finding of the study was that the participants living with their families emphasized the effects of gender differences on themselves. In particular, male

participants stated that they felt more comfortable in making decisions about the times they enter and leave the house, where they go and what they do. However, the same was not true for female participants and they felt more restricted in these matters. The female participants experiencing university life with their families stated that they were subjected to more control and restrictions in the home environment where they lived with their families, such as time spent with friends and hours spent outside. These participants said that this situation showed how gender roles and social expectations were reflected in the dynamics within the family. They also emphasized that these differences affect female students' personal freedom and their ability to manage their social relationships negatively.

While the participants living in dormitories and student homes were pleased that they took their own responsibilities, they also stated that they faced time management problems while planning these responsibilities. In particular, they stated that they had difficulties in time management with individual responsibilities such as meal preparation, laundry, ironing, cleaning and shopping in addition to their academic studies and social needs. It was observed that the participants, who had no responsibilities other than studying when living with their families, had difficulties in dealing with such tasks and completing them on time because their families took many responsibilities. This was especially evident for students who were new to university life, as it was difficult for them to leave their previous habits and family support behind and get used to living on their own and taking responsibility.

Missing the families. The university participants had different experiences of being away from family. Some of them were used to struggling with family homesickness as they had stayed in student hostels or dormitories during high school and did not find it difficult. However, most students found it difficult to cope with family homesickness as it was their first time away from their families when they arrived at university. In the beginning, they reported that they missed their families very much and even had crying spells when they first arrived at university. However, they stated that they overcame this situation with the support of their friends over time. They also mentioned that the frequency of phone and video calls with their families, which used to be frequent, decreased. Being away from their families during this period made them realize the value of their families more deeply and they felt the love of their

families more when they went to their hometowns. However, these participants stated that this situation created negative effects on their psychology as they thought that siblings who were with their families were paid more attention and cared for more. These findings reflect the participants' varied experiences and emotional reactions to family distance and family longing.

Psychological wellbeing. The interviews with participants at ADYU revealed that university life affected students' psychological wellbeing. Firstly, uncertainties and future concerns associated with students' academic performance were identified as an important cause of psychological stress. According to the explanations of some participants, the situations such as pressure to succeed academically and exam stress caused students to experience mental problems. That means, according to the results, intensive course schedules, exams and the need to complete assignments on time are among the main sources of stress for students. Almost all of the participants were concerned that the intense stress, especially during exam periods, affected their academic performance. They said that, in this process, difficulties in coping with academic expectations and time management had also negative effect on their psychological health. Research findings clearly show that academic achievement pressure and exam stress in the university environment increase students' stress levels and pave the way for mental health problems.

Secondly, emotional difficulties such as problems in social interactions, efforts to harmonize with peer groups and feelings of loneliness were also among the important factors affecting students' psychological wellbeing. It was revealed that some of the participants had various statements that their lives were negatively affected mentally by the stress of struggling with loneliness. Especially the difficulties experienced in the process of establishing new friendships and efforts to adapt to the social environment negatively affected students' psychological wellbeing, especially at the beginning of the university.

Thirdly, some participants underlined that the challenges of daily life such as financial difficulties, housing problems and health problems could also have negative effects on their psychological wellbeing. The conflict between focusing on academic achievement and meeting educational expenses while struggling with financial

difficulties stands out as a factor that negatively affects students' mental health. These findings suggest that the difficulties experienced by university students have not only academic but also social and economic dimensions and that these difficulties affect students' mental health.

According to the statements of the participants, there was no information about the existence of specific places in universities to receive psychological support. Some participants stated that students who wanted to take psychological help only supported by the senior year students of psychological counseling and guidance department in the scope of practice-oriented courses or individual studies of the lecturers of the relevant department on some subjects. However, they stated that the university itself does not provide psychological support in a systematic way. In addition, a participant staying in a public dormitory stated that there was a spiritual counseling room in the dormitory, but the door of this room was always closed. This situation shows the difficulties students experience in accessing psychological support services and the inadequacy of available resources.

Anxiety for the future. Some of the participants emphasized that the competition among students was unbelievable since they thought that almost almost everyone in Türkiye was a university graduate. These participants stated that they saw their friends as competitors, especially in order to be better in the academic field. This competitive environment caused students to be in a constant struggle to increase their academic success. Therefore, some participants expressed great concerns about finding a future job, living a quality life and economic independence in Türkiye. They underlined that the high unemployment rates in the country and the fierce competition in the labor market have increased students' concerns about the future.

In short, some students who participated in the study expressed that they were worried about finding a job after graduation and had uncertainties about pursuing the career they wanted. In addition, economic uncertainties and increased competition in the labor market also increase students' concerns about the future.

4.1.2.1.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of social engagement, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) campus life, (II) inactive student clubs, and (III) differences in student profiles and relationships.

4.1.2.1.4.1 Campus Life

In terms of campus life, the findings of ADYU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) physical structure of campus, (ii) limited social opportunities of campus, (iii) satisfaction with campus security and (iv) convenient transportation to campus.

Physical structure of campus. The statements of some of the participants revealed that they embraced the campuses of their universities with great love due to their natural beauty and green environment. Some of the students who participated in the research were very impressed by the calm and peaceful atmosphere of their campus. They underlined that especially the green areas surrounding their campuses aroused positive emotions among students and made the campus environment more attractive. These participants stated that the green environment of their campus had a stress-reducing and motivating effect. Additionally, a significant portion of the participants evaluated the university campus in Adıyaman as the most beautiful place. These findings show that the natural beauty of university campuses positively affects students' campus life and increases their love and commitment to their campuses. For example, one participant stated that:

> I like it in terms of the campus, you know that the southeast is not a region that is very green like this, but the campus has such a green area with the impression of being intertwined with nature. I liked the afforestation inside the campus. Unfortunately, this is something we are not used to in the southeast of Türkiye - ADYU1 -

On the contrary, the statements of some students among the participants revealed that they did not fully like the campus of their university and that there were some deficiencies. Some of the participants stated that only certain parts of their campuses were afforested and that the physical space available to the university was not used sufficiently. In particular, it was emphasized that the green areas of the campus were limited in certain areas, the surroundings of some faculties are in a steppe state and the

physical structure where students could sit and spend time outside was inadequate. Some participants described the campus as a city park and thought that the campus should be developed as a larger social space rather than used only for academic purposes. These findings highlight the importance of improving the physical environments of campuses and providing larger and more diverse areas where students can spend time outdoors.

Among the participants of the study, there were students who expressed satisfaction with the enrichment of a certain part of the campus with miniatures of the historical structures of the city, such as Nemrut Mountain. The participants stated that these miniatures provided an aesthetic contribution to the campus atmosphere and allowed them to get to know the city's historical and cultural heritage more closely. They also stated that these miniatures make the campus more attractive and provide students with a pleasant view while walking around or relaxing. This shows that equipping the campus environment with historical and cultural elements has a positive impact on students.

Limited social opportunities of campus. The views of research participants on the social facilities on campus were generally focused on inadequacy. Most of the participants emphasized that there were deficiencies in organizing social activities on campus, increasing recreational areas and creating community centers. In particular, the lack of cafes and recreational areas caused students to experience difficulties in meeting their social interaction and recreational needs.

Focusing primarily on the cafe and dining hall facilities on campus, some participants noted that the presence of only two medium-sized cafes in the university with a population of approximately 40,000 was generally found to be limited. This was seen as a lack of diversity and alternatives in campus facilities by these participants who wanted to spend time on campus. The need for more cafes or recreational areas was emphasized, especially for the participants who wanted to relax or socialize during lunch breaks or between classes. In addition, with regard to sports facilities, some participants expressed that they had difficulties in using the sports fields. In particular, although the sports fields are empty, the lack of necessary equipment or the lack of appropriate conditions limits students' opportunities to play sports. The intensity of

applied courses in the Faculty of Sport Sciences also caused the sports fields to be underutilized by the students.

The participants of the ADYU complained that there were very limited cultural, artistic and sports activities within the university. In fact, two participants reported that the opportunities for socialization in their high school experiences were richer than those offered by the university. Most of the participants stated that the activities organized by the university were not diverse enough and were limited in number. In particular, the lack of cultural and artistic activities was highlighted as preventing students from developing themselves artistically and culturally and benefiting from a variety of activities. Similarly, they also stated that the limited number of sports activities made it difficult for students to adopt a healthy lifestyle and maintain their sports habits. For example, one participant stated that:

> Students often want to improve themselves in a second different field outside their own field. This could be learning to play an instrument, improving themselves in any art branch, accessing courses and trainings in a sports branch. University students would like to encounter more guidance in terms of the skills, artistic or sportive skills or hobbies related to their interests that they would like to acquire outside of the department they are studying. Let me put it this way, I learned how to play an instrument, but I would like to find a little more easily accessible information on campus, such as where I can learn – ADYU27-

It was realized that only some academic-oriented talks were organized on the campus and these attracted little interest of the students. In terms of social activities, it was revealed that a raw meatball (çiğ köfte) event, which was cultural asset of Adıyaman, has been organized at the beginning of the academic year. Most of the participants stated that they did not find much opportunity to socialize during the year, except for a concert given by the university's conservatory students and a few concert events where local artists performed. This situation emphasizes the need to offer a wider range of activities for students to enjoy campus life more and to develop themselves in different fields. For example, one participant stated that:

> Let me tell you something concrete, I am someone who is interested in artistic activities, theater, etc. I have tried to take theater training, etc. individually before. These are the things I have been looking for since I came here, for example, such activities. My eyes are looking for such activities. Recently there was a theater event, I eagerly intended to go. It was not a well-announced event

> anyway. I came across it in a WhatsApp group. I said I would go but I didn't attend the activity since the hall was inadequate hall. The hall was completely full and I couldn't enter the hall… Probably due to the fact that there was very little supply, students were in demand when there were such activities and there was no space left. I think it should be diversified a little more – ADYU5 -

Sharing their experiences about the lack of social activities in campus life, some participants emphasized that the youth centers affiliated to the Ministry of Youth and Sports built next to their campus provided an important solution. The participants, who had the opportunity to attend courses in various fields such as folk dances, theater, painting through these centers, stated that they had the opportunity to meet people from different faculties as well as expanding their social circles. It was stated that the social activities offered by the youth centers played an important role in helping the participants to spend their free time and contribute to their socialization and developing their social skills. In this context, participants stated that youth centers gave them the opportunity to engage in social activities and made campus life richer and more interactive.

Satisfaction with campus security. All participants except for few participants of the study generally felt safe on campus because of that only students, faculty members and people with permission from the rectorate could enter the campus. However, four participants stated that they were disturbed by dog attacks on campus. According to their explanations, a student's arm was shattered as a result of a dog attack in one of the previous semesters and they were afraid to walk around the campus, especially in the evenings. This is an important issue that needs to be taken into consideration in terms of campus safety. For example, one participant stated that:

> I can say that the campus is generally safe but there are dogs. The dogs on campus shattered a friend's arm in the past weeks and that friend was taken to the hospital. Such things should not happen on campus. For example, when I walk around the campus with my girlfriend, even she is scared... Animals should not be so disturbing on campus – ADYU17 -

Convenient transportation to campus. In terms of transportation to the campus, the participants of ADYU have not generally had problems due to the small size of the city and they can easily find minibus services. The small size of the city facilitates the participants' transportation to the campus because the minibuses usually run frequently and respond to the demands of the students. It was also noteworthy that there were

public dormitories right next to the campus. This provided ease of access to the campus for participants whose dormitories were within walking distance to the campus. In particular, the participants staying in these dormitories said that they could easily walk to the campus without facing extra transportation costs or difficulties.

4.1.2.1.4.2. Inactive Student Clubs

Among ADYU participants, it was stated that student clubs existed only in the name, but they did not actively operate. Some participants stated that there were many different student clubs within the university. However, it was stated that most of these societies were only officially established and then did not actively operate. It was found that student clubs like those in well-established universities did not exist in rural universities such as ADYU. In these universities, some participants thought that there was no formal infrastructure which encourage students to participate in such societies. As a result, it was emphasized that students have limited opportunities to participate in activities that would increase their social interactions and meet their interests.

The participants of the study stated that student clubs were only visible and in contact with them at the beginning of the year, but they were not in contact throughout the year as the clubs did not have a room or a place of their own. They also stated that students who wanted to establish new student clubs at the beginning of each academic year collected signatures due to the rectorate's expectation of a minimum number of members, but did not follow through. Some participants stated that they did not want to be involved in student clubs because they might have ideological and political approaches. They expressed that they hesitated to get involved in such societies because they thought that such structures would have negative effects on their future lives and careers.

4.1.2.1.4.3. Struggles in Student Profiles and Relationships

The participants of the university stated that the student profiles of the university generally consisted of students from the surrounding provinces, which made it difficult to meet different ideas and opinions. In particular, they thought that students from the same regions have similar cultural and social backgrounds, which limits their exposure to diverse views and opinions. They underlined that this restricted students'

opportunities to broaden their own perspectives and understand different perspectives. For example, one participant stated that:

> I prepared for the university exam for two years because I wanted to study medicine, but I regretted it a little bit...Afterwards, I wonder if it would have been better if I had studied dentistry or something in the west, I wonder if I made the wrong choice because studying here does not add anything to my mindset. I have acquaintances here, the environment is always familiar to me. I always see people from my own region, even from my own high school. When I look here, I can't find other people to improve myself, for example, I can't find a field to improve myself. Probably these would have been better in the west – ADYU10 -

However, although some participants felt that this situation also provided them with the opportunity to better understand and defend their own ideas and values, the number of participants who realized that being together with people who were not different from them was an obstacle to personal development outweighed than the others. According to some participants, increasing diversity among students and greater interaction between students from different regions could contribute to a richer and more inclusive cultural experience in the university environment.

Most of the participants thought that coming together with students from different cultures and cities often could provide an environment that encouraged them to learn to step out of their comfort zone. Through these experiences, these participants argued that they would be able to improve their empathy and help them develop a more open attitude towards cultural differences. They thought that personal and social development could be supported by allowing students to have experiences outside of their comfort zones. They suggested diversified student profiles would contribute to students' self-development and help them become more flexible and understanding individuals.

A striking finding in the research is the presence of students in the student population who dropped out of university and then came to ADYU. In ADYU case, five participants had previously enrolled in another university and department, went there and were not satisfied, and then enrolled in ADYU. When the reasons behind this situation were analyzed, several factors affecting students' decisions to drop out of university stand out. First of all, it is noteworthy that two participants chose their previous universities due to family pressure. These students, who chose a university

and department in line with the wishes of their families, later realized that this choice was not suitable for them and changed universities. The other three participants could not find the education and opportunities they expected at their previous university. As can be understood from their own statements, the lack of adequate opportunities and support in their field of interest caused them to lose motivation and dissatisfaction. These students searched for a new university where they could express themselves better and receive a more qualified education. In addition, it was observed that these participants changed universities in order to choose a department that was more secure in terms of employment and where they could better shape their future. In particular, students who felt that their previous majors were inadequate in terms of job opportunities or career potential switched universities in order to target a more suitable field. Similarly, two different participants had previously graduated from a university and decided to re-enter university. The reason why these two participants wanted to re-enter university education was that they did not find employment opportunities in their previous departments.

Some of the participants stated that being in a smaller and more familiar environment during their high school years allowed them to build deep and lasting relationships with their friends. Furthermore, high school was perceived to have a less competitive and less oppressive atmosphere, which allowed students to form stronger bonds.

Many of the participants stated that when they first came to the university, they quickly made friends in order to adapt to their social environment and not to be alone. However, they stated that these quickly established relationships were later damaged. In particular, some participants stated that these relationships remained on the surface and lacked depth.

Some participants also stated that they observed that the social environment at university did not reflect who people were and that most relationships were profit-oriented. The participants who thought that factors such as insincerity and lack of trust were dominant in their relationships stated that this situation negatively affected their social interactions. These participants indicated that their relationships with their peers were not only based on cooperation and collaboration, but also on competition and conflicts of interest. In other words, the students who participated in the study stated

that there was intense academic competition in the university environment and that this situation creates stress, anxiety and insecurity among students. These participants stated that the pressure on exams, grade point averages and academic achievements negatively affected their friendships. According to some participants od ADYU, competition was thought to fuel feelings of jealousy and rivalry among students instead of cooperation and solidarity. They underlined that this situation caused a lack of trust in their social life.

4.1.2.1.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

Under the category of financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) financial challenges and budget management, (II) challenging accommodation conditions and (III) differences in nutrition opportunities.

Financial challenges and budget management. The discourses of some of ADYU participants revealed that being a university student in Türkiye was extremely economically challenging. These participants expressed great difficulty in meeting even their basic needs, especially due to ever-increasing inflation and prices. Most participants reported serious difficulties in accessing funds for higher education costs, housing, nutrition, transportation and other daily expenses. For example, one participant stated that:

> Due to the fact that I have to work while studying on the one hand, I no longer have the luxury of focusing only on university. Obviously, since I had to work and study at the same time, I had to choose a place close to the city I live in. In fact, I could have won a much different university with my university placement score. I had a much better degree, I could have settled in a different university in the same department, but the reason why I preferred the nearby one is obviously economic reasons – ADYU16 -

Due to economic hardship, some participants were forced to work as waiters, waitresses, cashiers, shop assistants, or rely on extra financial support from their families to meet their basic needs. Among the research participants, some students expressed that they had difficulty and hesitation in asking for extra money from their families because they thought they were adults. These students stated that they felt embarrassed or awkward asking for financial support from their families due to their desire to be financially independent throughout their university life. They also stated

that they tended to avoid asking for extra financial support from their families because their families' economic situation was already difficult.

It clearly shows that university students in Türkiye are struggling with economic hardship and this situation has a significant impact on their lives. Some participants emphasized that university and government officials should take more effective steps to provide economic support and resources to students and make efforts to improve their living standards. They said that the amount of repayable loan scholarship provided to students was very inadequate in today's conditions.

Challenging accommodation conditions. According to the results of the research, it was observed that some of the participants stayed in their family homes, while others lived in student homes with friends or alone, but the majority of them stayed in public dormitories. It was determined that the participants who wanted to live at home could not realize this desire, especially due to the high rental costs. Looking at the experiences of students staying in public dormitories, it was revealed that dormitory conditions have varied considerably. They said that, while some rooms were organized as wards for 8 people, others were designed for up to 4 students. It was stated that students had difficulty in creating individual spaces in the dormitory environment, and that they were especially challenged by multiple common areas such as bathrooms and toilets. The dormitory students who participated in the research stated that they could ignore such problems when they got along well with their roommates, but they were negatively affected when they had problems with issues such as cleanliness and order.

In addition, it was emphasized that the strict practices in the entrance and exit times of the dormitory disturbed all dormitory participants. In particular, students who thought that the obligation to enter the dormitory at 11 p.m. limited their social lives and study hours with their friends stated that this rule made it difficult for them to feel themselves as adults.

Differences in nutrition opportunities. The majority of the participants stated that they found the meals served at the university cafeteria delicious and satisfying, despite the fact that the same ingredients were repeated over and over again under different names. Considering the economic situation of the country, they stated that the meal fee of 7 liras was quite affordable, but they found the 100% increase compared to the

previous year too much. Despite this time, the majority of students found the price of food affordable and economical. Some students, like the other respondents, found the price of food affordable, although they noted that it was more expensive compared to other public universities. However, some stated that the atmosphere at the university prevented even such protests. In this scope, one participant stated that:

> There are two meals for students, lunch and dinner, and the food is good. Although the food situation is ideal compared to the situation of universities in Türkiye, I think that the prices are a little higher here compared to some universities. Because I have information about other universities about cafeteria prices. I think it is a little higher here – ADYU14 -

When the dining facilities of public dormitories were evaluated by the participants, it was found that the majority of the students thought that the food was tasteless, small and of poor quality. Some students stated that the food they ate negatively affected their health and that they had to spend a lot of money on nutrition outside. The participants who lived in student housing, on the other hand, stated that they had difficulty in shopping and buying foodstuffs due to the ever-increasing inflation and price hikes. In this situation, they stated that they had to skip their evening meals. These findings reveal the difficulties and economic difficulties of students in terms of nutrition and food supply.

4.1.2.1.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of political engagement, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) lack of effort for student growth by university administration, (II) lack of student voice in university decisions and (III) dominance of university administrators in the virtual face of the university.

Lack of effort for student growth by university administration. According to the findings of the research, it revealed that the university administration and relevant authorities were sometimes insufficient to develop the university and offer various development opportunities to students. Some participants stated that the university administration should not only focus on academic tasks but also give importance to the personal, social and professional development of students. However, the interviews showed that the university administration did not make sufficient efforts in this regard and did not provide sufficient resources and support to offer various

development opportunities to students. These participants underlined that the university should improve student clubs, social events on campus, internship opportunities and career services. The participants expected the university administration to focus more on the overall growth of students and take more effective steps to provide students with a more comprehensive experience.

Some participants expected innovations and opportunities in various fields from the university administration. First of all, these participants were demanding more elective courses and interdisciplinary programs to enrich their academic experience. They believed this would help students better prepare for their careers by ensuring that they had the opportunity to deepen and expand in different areas. In addition, these participants demanded the support of events and student clubs that would enrich the social and cultural life of the university. They considered it important that such activities allowed students to improve themselves, increase their leadership skills and experience various cultural experiences. In addition, participants also expected their access to career-related guidance and internship opportunities to be facilitated. According to them, the university administration should establish strong connections with the business world, offer students internship and job opportunities and help them plan their careers. Finally, students wanted to access university psychological health services and counseling centers to be improved and made accessible to support their physical and mental health.

Lack of student voice in university decisions. There has been a widespread discomfort that students, who are an important part of university life, were not adequately represented in the decisions taken by the university administration according to expressions of some participants. The findings of this research revealed that the majority of participants believed that the university administration did not sufficiently take student expectations, demands and ideas into account when making certain decisions.

More than half of the students participating in the research stated that the university administration did not consult the opinions of the student community or did not attach sufficient importance to these opinions when making some important decisions. In particular, student participation in decision making was thought to be insufficient in

matters such as changes in academic programs, campus policies, measurement and evaluation approaches, and the content of organized scientific events. The participants stated that this situation made them feel passive and ineffective in matters affecting university life. For example, one participant stated that:

> The university administration has a political point of view. I think our university is like that too. That's why we hesitate when we say something. I may not speak in accordance with the mentality of the university administration, I may not speak in accordance with their principles. The ideas of the rector and my ideas may not match. However, I should be free to express an opinion. I should criticize my university. I do not say anything bad about my university. I am saying that the university should be improved in these areas. Maybe what I say may not be very attractive to them, but they should listen us – ADYU22 -

For example, the difficulties experienced by students in coping with exam stress and allocating enough time for their individual/social development were attributed, in the eyes of the participants, to the decision made by the university administration. The students participating in the research criticized the examination system at their universities and stated that this system should be changed. In particular, they stated that the "two midterms and final" exam pattern caused students to be under constant exam stress and have difficulty focusing on their individual/social development. The participants said that they sought solutions by conveying these problems to their instructors. Along with the proposal to switch to “one midterm and final” exam pattern, they also suggested that alternative evaluation methods could be used. However, despite these demands of the students, most of the instructors stated that these changes were decisions that should be taken at the university level and that the "two midterms and final" exam system, which would be implemented in all faculties except the faculty of medicine. This situation revealed that the university administration centrally intervened in the examination systems by without giving initiative to the instructor of each course. The participants said that as a result of long-lasting insistence and the determined attitude of the students, the university administration finally decided to abandon “two midterms and final” examination system and switch to “one midterm and final”. However, it seems that students had to struggle for a long time to make this change happen. This shows how late students' voices are being heard and the university administration's reluctance to make changes

Dominance of university administrators in the virtual face of the university. In today's digital age, universities' websites and social media accounts play an important role as institutions' doors to the outside world. However, from the discourses of several of the participants of this research, there is a distinct perception that the content of many of the posts on these pages is disturbing. According to the statements of two participants, it was revealed that they thought that the administrators of the university and its units were highlighted excessively on the home pages of the university's official website and in the posts on social media accounts. These participants stated that the home pages are filled with university administrators' photos, messages, and a large section dedicated to their events. Consistent visits to university administrators and meetings of university administrators with various government officials, institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc. were generally focus of virtual faces of the university. They said that their visits were photographed and shared. These participants were disturbed by the use of these pages as personal accounts. For example, one participant stated that:

> There is nothing that the university shares on its own page. I can say that there was nothing to attract me on the university website. I didn't see anything about student clubs on it. I look at the posts on the university's web accounts. The rector constantly congratulated someone, someone congratulated the rector. Here, our university is at the top of science, something has already been done about the coronavirus. Our rector is always in the foreground on these pages – ADYU32 -

The participants who used these expressions stated that they were looking for more interaction and information from websites, but content that constantly focused on university and faculty administrators did not meet these expectations. As students of this university, they demanded that websites and social media accounts be filled with more academic content, student activities and information about campus life. It was observed that the excessive space allocated to the administrators of university and its units created a feeling of imbalance and deficiency in communication, rather than giving students the opportunity to express their own experiences and needs. These discourses revealed that student-centered content should be emphasized more and university official websites and social media accounts should serve the student community more effectively. Otherwise, there is a risk that websites will become an inconvenience rather than an effective communication tool.

4.1.2.2. Interpretative Findings of ADYU

In this section, for ADYU participants, the researcher's interpretations regarding the six fundamental categories of student engagement are included. Through a more interpretative approach, this analysis tries to delve into each category. It contributes to a comprehensive understanding of student engagement in ADYU.

4.1.2.2.1. Environment of University

The findings highlight that student engagement in university life is profoundly influenced by pre-enrollment expectations and the broader context of the university and its surrounding city. Before students even step onto campus, they have already formed a set of expectations based on various sources. It shapes their initial engagement to university life. These expectations play a critical role in their overall engagement. Additionally, the university and city contexts further impact student engagement under the university environment category: targeted learning programs, employability, rich social environment expectations, personal development expectations, the city's social limitations, the influence of religious sects, and the new establishment status of the university.

Pre-enrollment expectations and realities. One of the significant insights is that students often enter university with specific academic and personal goals influenced by their pre-enrollment expectations. However, the central examination system in Türkiye means that not all students can enroll in their desired programs. It leads some to reluctantly choose fields that do not align with their interests or talents. This misalignment often stems from practical considerations, such as avoiding the financial and psychological burden of re-preparing for exams. Additionally, familial pressure plays a crucial role in shaping these decisions, with some students pursuing degrees in fields like engineering or medicine due to their parents' perceptions of better employment prospects. These mismatches can lead to diminished academic success and personal dissatisfaction, affecting overall engagement negatively.

University as a preparation ground for employment. *A crucial aspect of student engagement identified in the findings is the expectation that university should act as a preparatory ground for future employment.* Many participants regarded their

university experience as a critical step towards their careers. It highlights the importance of integrating practical experiences with academic knowledge. They expected universities to provide continuous learning opportunities, including internships, collaborative projects, and applied courses. This pragmatic approach underscores the students' desire for a holistic educational experience. By aligning academic programs with practical career preparation, universities can enhance student engagement.

Context of city and university. The findings highlight that student engagement is heavily influenced by the expectation of a rich social environment at university. However, in cities like Adıyaman, where social opportunities are limited, these expectations frequently clash with reality. The lack of cultural events, entertainment venues, and social activities significantly diminishes student engagement. *Moreover, the influence of religious cults in the city imposes social constraints that further impede student engagement.* These constraints limit students' freedom of expression and social interactions. They are seen as vital components of an engaging university experience. *The atmosphere created by these social and political factors often leads to a disengaged student body, as students struggle to find the vibrant and inclusive environment.* Addressing these contextual challenges is essential for promoting not only academic success but also overall engagement in university life. By focusing on improving the social environment, universities can better meet the expectations of their students. It thereby boosts engagement and creates a more dynamic and fulfilling university experience.

In summary, the findings suggest that student engagement is deeply intertwined with their pre-university expectations, the alignment of their academic pursuits with personal interests, the practical preparation for future employment, and the quality of the social environment both within and outside the university.

4.1.2.2.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

The findings highlight several key factors influencing academic engagement at the university. The analysis is structured around four categories under academic staff, teaching methods, infrastructure and resources, and academic culture.

Academic staff. The academic staff's availability and expertise significantly affect academic engagement. *The limited number of academic personnel results in increased workloads, leading to insufficient performance and quality of teaching. Students often find themselves in courses taught by lecturers whose expertise does not align with the course content.* It hinders their ability to provide in-depth and practical knowledge. This misalignment decreases student engagement, as the educational experience lacks the expected guidance and relevance. Furthermore, the loss of talented academics, leads to instability in students' learning experiences, thereby diminishing their academic engagement.

Teaching methods and practical application. The findings reveal that the teaching methods employed heavily influence academic engagement. Many courses are predominantly theoretical, which students find challenging to relate to practical applications. *This theory-heavy approach limits students' ability to engage deeply with the material, as they struggle to see its real-world relevance. In contrast, courses that incorporate practical and hands-on learning experiences result in higher engagement*. Students express a strong desire for more interactive and application-based learning. Effective teaching techniques, such as dynamic and interactive lectures, are crucial for maintaining student engagement.

Infrastructure and resources. The infrastructure and resources available at the university play a crucial role in academic engagement. Inadequate physical spaces such as overcrowded classrooms and insufficient laboratory equipment impede the learning process. Students report difficulties in concentrating and participating actively due to the lack of proper facilities. *Additionally, technological limitations, especially evident during the shift to online learning during the pandemic, further hindered engagement.* Reliable access to digital resources and effective online teaching methods are essential for maintaining engagement in remote learning environments. *A well-equipped and accessible library also supports academic engagement*.

Academic culture and support. The academic culture at the university, which prioritizes academic development, significantly impacts student engagement positively. *A culture that emphasizes only academic achievement without supporting*

students' personal and professional development leads to disengagement. Students need a holistic support system that includes career planning and development services. The lack of guidance in these areas leaves students feeling unprepared for their future careers. It negatively affects their engagement. Moreover, opportunities for international exposure and collaboration are limited, which could otherwise enhance engagement by broadening students' perspectives and experiences.

In summary, academic engagement at the university is deeply influenced by the adequacy of academic staff, the effectiveness of teaching methods, the availability of infrastructure and resources, and the inclusiveness of the academic culture. Addressing these areas can significantly enhance student engagement.

4.1.2.2.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

The findings reveal several key factors influencing psychological engagement among university students, namely, individual autonomy and responsibility, homesickness, psychological wellbeing, and future anxiety.

Individual autonomy and responsibility. University life represents a critical transition from adolescence to adulthood. It significantly enhances psychological engagement through increased independence and responsibility. Students living away from home feel more autonomous as they manage their schedules and daily routines without family oversight. This independence, coupled with managing household tasks and finances, strengthens their self-efficacy and adult identity. Conversely, students living with their families, especially female students, feel more restricted, affecting their sense of engagement. *This means gender is another component that shapes student engagement especially for women. The female students expressing stricter supervision and pressure from the family is a significant finding of the case*. In addition, autonomy is crucial for psychological engagement, fostering personal growth and mental wellbeing.

Homesickness. *Homesickness emerges as a significant emotional challenge impacting psychological engagement*. Students, particularly those away from family for the first time, experience intense feelings of longing and emotional distress. However, feelings of being less valued compared to siblings at home can persist, negatively impacting

psychological wellbeing. These findings highlight the need for supportive measures to help students cope with homesickness. It is crucial for maintaining psychological engagement and overall wellbeing.

Psychological wellbeing. *Psychological wellbeing is deeply influenced by academic pressures, social integration, and daily life challenges, all affecting psychological engagement*. Academic stress from heavy workloads and performance pressures, along with difficulties in forming friendships and social integration, contribute to mental health issues. *Additionally, economic hardships and balancing academic responsibilities with financial pressures diminish psychological engagement*. Effective stress management and support systems are essential to sustain psychological engagement, addressing the multifaceted challenges students face.

Future anxiety. Future anxiety significantly affects psychological engagement, with students expressing concerns about their careers due to competitive job markets and economic instability of the country. *Fear of unemployment and academic pressures to secure a better future heighten anxiety, detracting from present engagement.* Career guidance and support services are vital to help students navigate these anxieties and plan effectively for their futures. Addressing future anxiety is essential for fostering a more engaged and mentally healthy student body.

In summary, psychological engagement among university students is profoundly affected by autonomy, homesickness, psychological wellbeing, and future anxiety. Enhancing support systems in these areas can significantly improve psychological engagement and mental health, leading to a more fulfilling university experience.

4.1.2.2.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

The findings identify key factors influencing social engagement among university students, namely, campus life, inactive student clubs, and student profiles and relationship dynamics.

Campus life. The campus environment significantly affects students' social engagement. Many participants appreciated the natural beauty and green spaces, which created a serene and motivating atmosphere. However, some students criticized the limited green areas and inadequate infrastructure for social activities. The lack of

cafes, recreation areas, and community centers, along with insufficient cultural, artistic, and sports events hindered students' opportunities in terms of social engagement.

Inactive student clubs. Student clubs at ADYU were largely inactive, diminishing their potential to enhance social engagement. Many participants noted that these clubs were not visible or active throughout the academic year. This inactivity limited students' opportunities to find communities that matched their interests and build social connections. *Strengthening support for student clubs is essential to foster social engagement.*

Student profiles and relationship dynamics. *The homogeneity of the student body, primarily from surrounding regions, restricted exposure to diverse perspectives and ideas. It limits social engagement of university students*. The competitive academic environment further strained social relationships. It leads to superficial connections driven by practical benefits rather than genuine personal bonds. *In addition, interaction among the members of the university is lacking with a sense of community. Academic and social exchanges are limited as a result*. Promoting a diverse student body and fostering a collaborative environment can enhance social engagement.

In summary, improving campus facilities, supporting active student clubs, and fostering a diverse and collaborative environment are vital for enhancing social engagement among university students.

4.1.2.2.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

The findings of the study highlight several critical factors influencing student engagement, particularly focusing on financial challenges, accommodation issues, and food accessibility.

Financial challenges and budget management. The financial difficulties faced by university students significantly impact their engagement. Many participants reported struggling to meet basic needs due to rising inflation and living costs. This economic strain forces students to work part-time jobs, often at the expense of their academic focus. *The dual pressure of working and studying diminishes their ability to fully engage with university life and academic pursuits*. Additionally, *the reluctance to seek*

extra financial support from families due to feelings of independence or family economic constraints decreases their overall engagement.

Accommodation challenges. Accommodation conditions also play a pivotal role in student engagement. *Overcrowded living conditions and the lack of personal space in dormitories hinder students' ability to concentrate and find comfort, leading to dissatisfaction and reduced engagement*. Strict dormitory regulations such as entrance and exit times to the dormitory, further limit students' social interactions and study opportunities. As a result, it negatively affects their sense of autonomy and overall engagement.

Nutrition accessibility. *Differences in food accessibility and quality further impact student engagement.* While some students found university cafeteria meals to be affordable and satisfactory, others pointed out the repetitiveness and price increases as issues. *Particularly in KYK dormitories, the poor quality of food forces students to spend more on external food sources, straining their already tight budgets.* This not only affects their physical health but also their mental wellbeing and ability to stay engaged with their studies and campus life.

Overall, financial hardships, inadequate accommodation, and inconsistent food quality create a challenging environment for students. It detracts from their engagement and potentially impacts their academic success and personal development.

4.1.2.2.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

The findings highlight key factors affecting political engagement among university students, focusing on the university administration's efforts toward student development, the lack of student voice in university decisions, and the dominance of university leaders in the institution's online presence.

University administration's efforts toward student development. Participants feel that the university administration often neglects their personal, social, and professional development needs. *This lack of support diminishes political engagement, as students perceive the administration's focus is mainly on academic matters, with insufficient attention to student clubs, social events, internships, and career services*.

Lack of student voice in university decisions. A recurring theme among participants is the perceived absence of student representation in university decision-making processes. *Many students feel that their opinions and needs are not adequately considered in key decisions affecting academic programs, campus policies, and evaluation methods. This marginalization diminishes students' political engagement, as they feel their voices are not heard or valued.* The struggle to influence changes in the exam system, for example, highlights the slow and reluctant response from the administration.

Dominance of university leaders in the institution's online presence. Students noted that the university's online platforms mainly showcase leaders' activities and messages. This top-down approach limits their participation and contribution to the university's digital narrative, reducing their political engagement. They seek more student-centric content that reflects their interests and activities. It would foster inclusion and engagement in university life.

In summary, to boost political engagement, universities should actively involve students in decision-making and ensure their voices are represented in both physical and digital spaces. This approach would empower students and foster a stronger connection to their university community.

4.1.3. Case 3: Uşak University (UU)

Within-case of UU, the findings of UU are presented in two distinct ways. In the first part, the collected data are transformed into descriptive findings. In the second part, the researcher provides an interpretation of the data and observations, offering an analytical perspective on the findings.

4.1.3.1. Descriptive Findings of UU

Under these six categories, the results of Uşak University (UU) are presented in Table 13.

Table 13. *The findings of Uşak University (UU)*

Category	**Sub-themes**
Environment of university	Pressure to graduate from higher education Targeted program for studying Expectation of cooperative climate rather than competitive one Expectation of rich social environment Desire to keeping pace with digital transformation Social limitations of the city Safety concerns in the city Good geographical location of the city Dominant influence of political groups Economical friendly city than other western cities Newly establishment status of the university Continuous increase in student quotas
University in terms of academic engagement	Academic staff - *Communication problems of academic staff* - *Lack of competent academic staff* - *Need of teaching performance evaluation for academic staff* - *Difficulty in catching up new technologies* - *Guiding students in line with their interests and abilities* Teaching - *Theory-oriented or memories-oriented courses* - *Creation of course contents based on exams for public appointments* - *Power of field courses over elective courses* - *Crossing contents under different courses* - *Use of limited teaching techniques* - *Different evaluation mechanisms* - *Ineffectiveness of online teaching* - *Tendency to cheat in online exams*

	- *Internship experiences regarding professional life* - Infrastructure and resources - *Physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings* - *Good study halls and limited printed resources* - *Inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment* - *Limitations of technological infrastructure* Academic culture - *Lack of internationalization efforts* - *Graduate education plans* - *Inability to compete with well-established universities* - *Career planning and development*
University in terms of psychological engagement	Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities Varied influences of family dynamics Self-discovery Anxiety for the future and stress Psychological wellbeing Need for psychological support services Formation of mate selection criteria
University in terms of social engagement	Campus life - *Satisfaction with physical structure of campus* - *Limited social opportunities of campus* - *Satisfaction with campus security* - *Transportation challenges to campus* Inactive student clubs Differences in student relationships and communication
Financial issues, accommodation and nutrition	Financial challenges and budget management Challenging accommodation conditions Differences in nutrition opportunities
University in terms of political engagement	Need to be taken more responsibility for social opportunities

	Need for alumni network
	Message and request forms to the rector
	Organization of university web-pages

4.1.3.1.1. Environment of University

Student engagement is significantly influenced by expectations of university students prior to enrollment and the broader context and structure of the university and city. Before stepping onto campus, students form a set of anticipations based on information gathered from various sources. It shapes their initial perception and enthusiasm to university life. These expectations play a crucial role in their overall engagement. Additionally, the contexts of university and city further impact student engagement. Under the theme of environment of university, seven sub-themes are obtained. These 12 sub-themes are called (I) pressure to graduate from higher education, (II) targeted program for studying, (III) expectation of cooperative climate rather than competitive one, (IV) expectation of rich social environment, (V) desire to keeping pace with digital transformation, (VI) social limitations of the city, (VII) safety concerns in the city, (VIII) good geographical location of the city, (IX) dominant influence of political groups, (X) economical friendly city than other western cities, (XI) newly establishment status of the university, and (XII) continuous increase in student quotas.

Pressure to graduate from higher education. According to the findings of the study conducted at Uşak University, the participants underlined that graduation from a higher education institution was of critical importance today. Especially in the society, university graduation was perceived as an indispensable criterion for individuals' career and social success. This perception was based on factors such as the fact that university graduation increases employment opportunities, raises social status and contributes to personal development. Therefore, the fact that university graduation was accepted as a must-have criterion by the society stands out as an important source of motivation for individuals' educational life and career goals. For example, one participant stated that:

> I did not come to this university with great expectations. I did not have an ideal university in mind. My goal was just to study at university. I even came to my

> first choice. I didn't draw anything in my head, I chose whatever I was lucky enough to get – UU24 -

An important finding of the study was that first-generation students, whose both parents did not finish any university education program, tended to see university as a gateway to a better future. These individuals hoped to break the social class gap through university education and made a new start for a better future. For them, university has represented not only an academic education, but also an opportunity to achieve a better position economically and socially. Therefore, the fact that the first-generation students saw university as a way to move up a social class and shape their own future emphasized the importance of educational opportunities and the potential for social mobility. For example, one participant stated that:

> Normally my preference would not be theology. I graduated from imam hatip high school because my family wants it. People around me say that you have already studied imam hatip for 4 years, of course there is pressure from your family. I came here under the pressure of my family and we continue. If my family released me right now, I would leave this place and go, I would leave the university. I have a commercial mindset, my commercial mindset works a little bit – UU31 -

In this context, many families saw it as an important goal for their children to graduate from university due to their economic expectations. It leaded parents to be motivated and sometimes even insistent on enrolling their children in university. In an era of economic growth and increasingly complex job opportunities, families emphasized the importance of a university education to secure their children's future and ensure a better standard of living. In this context, some families took an active role in their children's decisions regarding university enrollment and sometimes displayed an interventionist attitude. While this might make it difficult for children to balance their own aspirations and family expectations in their educational and career choices, it also reflected the importance families attach to their children's future.

In the statements of some of the participants, an atmosphere of discomfort and criticism was observed against the perception that everyone should be a university graduate. The basis of these criticisms was that university education should not only be considered as a means of obtaining a title, but also as a means of personal development, acquiring knowledge and contributing to society. However, it is clear that there were students who came to university just to get a diploma. These individuals

have not care about the learning process as they only look at the education process as an outcome and only aim for the title of graduate. In addition, the students who could not study in targeted programs and those who came to university without knowing which department they have earned and its content were also among the groups criticized. This situation showed that students were not sufficiently conscious about their choice of department. However, they thought that students who studied at well-established universities made more informed choices and continue their education in a more meaningful way.

Targeted program for studying. Most of the participants stated that they had to study in fields they did not want to study because they could not find the opportunity to study in the programs they targeted. Since they could not get into the program they targeted in the university exam, they preferred the departments they did not want just to be a university graduate. Some students enrolled in university thinking that they could use their bachelor's degree as a stepping stone to other professions. They aimed to become teachers through the pedagogical formation certificate program or to take police interviews after completing the undergraduate program. However, they expressed that they were hopeless about their future due to rumors that the pedagogical formation certificate program would be abolished. For example, one participant stated that:

> In the early periods there was a certificate called formation. We were thinking that we would take formation and become a teacher, then I started university and 2 years later there was news that formation was abolished. After the formation was abolished, I didn't have any purpose about the university anymore, I thought that I would be good at the university and have a big diploma in my hand. I already failed this year, this year they opened the formation again and I started to concentrate on the courses again. Maybe we can become teachers. Or at worst we can become police officers – UU25 -

On the other hand, they stated that students who had achieved enough success to enter the universities and departments they wanted were pressured by their families to study in departments that they saw as employment guarantees, and that they missed this chance and had to study in fields they did not actually want. It was even observed that the participants studying in departments such as medicine and dentistry wanted to drop out of school. One student stated that he wanted to drop out university because of the conflict he had with his father, but that his father did not understand him. The

participant stated that his mother understood him and told him that he should drop out if he was unhappy, but his father did not understand him.

Expectation of cooperative climate rather than competitive one. Some participants stated that they were in an exam-oriented evaluation process from the beginning of their educational life to university entrance exam. In this process, they stated that they were in a constant competitive climate and under exam pressure due to exams such as transition exam from middle school to high school and the central university entrance exam. This situation was felt especially deeply in the period leading up to the university entrance exam. They hoped that at least in the university environment, there would be flexibility in the evaluation only based on numerical data and that competition would decrease, but they thought that competition would not disappear completely.

Some participants hoped that their university experience would emphasize cooperation and solidarity more than competition. They expressed an expectation that cooperative atmosphere would be emphasized in university life, especially in contrast to only exam-oriented evaluations. This reflects that students tend to prefer a collaborative climate rather than competitive environments in their educational life. They stated that a decrease in competition and an increase in cooperation in university experiences would contribute to students' ability to work together and create an effective learning environment by enabling teamwork. This emphasizes the importance of organizing higher education institutions and teaching methods to support students' collaboration skills and teamwork abilities. In other words, meeting these expectations can make students' university experience more positive and productive, and also contribute to their success in their professional life after graduation.

Expectation of rich social environment. This study shows that the participants generally have had high academic anxiety during their high school life and during the preparation process for the university entrance exam, and therefore they could not spare enough time for social activities. One of the underlying reasons for this situation was that university entrance exam was highly competitive and an important step that would shape students' future. In this process, students have faced a high level of stress that was directly related to their success. In this situation, they tended to sacrifice social

activities in order to spend more time and effort to increase their social achievement. For example, one participant stated that:

> My dream university was a place that does a little more social activities, develops its students more and prepares them for the sector. Because here we learn more academically, but after graduation we don't have much knowledge about the sector and social dynamics. So, I had hoped for a university that would train us for different aspects – UU12 -

Therefore, they could not devote enough time to personal interests such as sports and arts to compensate for this deficiency in university life. These participants have the desire to express themselves from a broader perspective and support their personal development in the university environment. In this process, they hoped to compensate for their lack of time for social activities and personal interests in their university life. According to the participants, an ideal university environment should provide students with the necessary support to maintain their academic success, while at the same time providing the opportunity to spend time on personal interests and social activities.

This need for compensation was usually directed towards sports and art activities. In the field of sports, they aimed to satisfy their interest in physical activity, especially by participating in team sports or individual sports. Participating in team sports such as football, basketball, volleyball or individual sports such as running and swimming seem to be important choices for these students. Also, in the field of arts, they have aimed to develop their creativity and expression by participating in artistic activities such as theater, painting and music. Gaining stage experience by joining theater clubs, producing works in painting workshops or learning to play a musical instrument were among the activities that may be of interest to these participants.

Desire to keeping pace with digital transformation. This study revealed that the participants thought that UU might be more open to innovations due to its newly established university status. They expected their university to become a center of innovation and freedom for the participants by providing students with the opportunity to freely express their ideas and thoughts and actively participate in the technological development of the university. In this context, participants came motivated to contribute to the growth and progress of their institution and expected the opportunity

to enrich the university culture through their own experiences. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think the focus in universities in Türkiye is to having the students with high grades and to use theoretical courses a lot. But there is no logic in this, especially for our generation, we are called Generation Z. Our generation is a generation that feeds on Tiktok, Instagram and Reels. It is also a generation that follows current technologies. Now we talk about artificial intelligence, we talk about augmented reality. Universities now need to include them in their courses – UU18 -

The research results clearly revealed the motivations and expectations of the participants who dreamed of virtual universities. This dream, which has eliminated accommodation problems due to Türkiye's lack of infrastructure, was seen as a tool to increase interaction at the local and international levels. In addition, virtual universities, which have enabled university students to find the opportunity to study in their targeted field of specialization, stand out with the adoption of criteria that would show real progress instead of grades-based evaluations. One participant's idea of establishing virtual universities as an alternative to traditional university structures. According to him, people could access the resources they want with small payments, communicate with the well-known researchers and academicians in their field and have the chance to practice with meta verse-like technologies in the digital environment. This new education model was seen as more digital and flexible than traditional university structures. It also emphasized that it could offer a more sustainable educational environment by requiring lower budgets in terms of accommodation and expenditure. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think that academic trainings should be given in terms of technology, regardless of which department a university student is studying, technology is advancing too much. Look, artificial intelligence is called, meta verse is called. There should be free courses for this now, but this should be disciplined, not in a cursory way, but something that can take it from a really simple level to an advanced level…. At the moment, no matter which department it is, everything is evolving to technology because we are in the age of technology. They are developing applications even in the field of psychology. I think that students should be more aware of this aspect and trainings should be given on these issues.

In this context, they have expected the creation of virtual universities that have facilitated access to resources and flexible course hours, reduced financial concerns

and encouraged social interaction. In addition, these participants thought that these platforms, which would allow individuals to express their ideas and lives uncensored, would help prevent brain drain by supporting group work and social interaction. This revealed the participants' belief in the potential of virtual universities for digital transformation. These participants saw more opportunities in virtual education platforms compared to traditional university models, reflecting their confidence that these platforms could bring about change and progress in the higher education system.

Social limitations of the city. The participants' observations suggested that Uşak was an undeveloped and underinvested city. These findings suggested that the city's social infrastructure was inadequate and its development potential was not fully utilized. These participants stated that public services and infrastructure in the city were behind compared to other settlements. This situation indicated that students were not satisfied with the quality of life in the city. These findings showed the need for more investment and strengthening the infrastructure for the economic and social development of the city.

Valuable feedback from university participants emphasized the importance of the shortcomings in terms of social life in the city. They reported that there were limited places to spend time outdoors with friends and insufficient opportunities for a variety of sports and cultural activities. In particular, cafes where only card games such as okey, batak and pis yedili have played are common, but more diverse social activities have been lacking.

In addition, it was revealed that the governorship and municipalities of the city in particular did not make sufficient preparations for social life opportunities for university students. This finding emphasized that local governments failed to take the necessary steps to meet the social needs of university students. They stated that the governorship and municipalities in the city did not provide sufficient infrastructure and support for various social activities such as sports, culture and entertainment for students. This situation has made it difficult for students to fully experience the social life in the city and causes student dissatisfaction. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think it is nothing that also develops Uşak, but nobody is aware of it. Nobody supports it. Neither the municipality, nor the governorship, nor the university supports what the students want to do within the university – UU23 -

According to the findings of the research, students' lives were usually spent between the university and their homes or dormitories, and when they have gone out, they have encountered limited options for social activities. This situation has limited students' participation in social interactions and activities and caused them to be confined to their homes or dormitory rooms. In this context, there are expectations to diversify the social life in the city and provide students with more opportunities for social activities, to enrich their university experience socially and to increase student satisfaction.

Safety concerns in the city. The results revealed that participants' perception of safety in the city is low. In particular, the desolation of the streets in the early hours and the fear of being out late at night have increased this sense of insecurity. They thought that this was related to the limited social life spaces in the city and that spending time outside at night was risky. On the other hand, the participants in evening education undergraduate programs faced a situation where compulsory class hours could make them feel uncomfortable. Most of the time, evening education classes have been held later in the day, which has raised safety concerns and negatively affected their academic performance. For example, one participant stated that:

> I don't feel safe in the city. I don't feel safe anywhere. It's something that comes from within. I can't put anything concrete into words. I didn't have any incidents on campus, but I face a lot of negativities in the city. I was followed by someone I didn't know until I came home. I carry pepper spray with me. I shouldn't have to – UU1 -

In addition, another factor affecting the perception of safety was the behavior of people in the city. The participants stated that they did not feel safe due to negative looks and verbal harassment towards the way people dress or behave in the city. It was clear that such negative interactions had a debilitating effect on the perception of safety in the city. In addition, disrespect in traffic and lack of social interactions were among the other factors that increased safety concerns. The participants stated that situations such as chaos in traffic and pedestrians not obeying traffic rules reduced the feeling of safety in the city. In addition, limited social interactions in the city also made people feel lonely and unsafe. For example, one participant stated that:

> It's an incredibly oppressive environment. I find myself questioning myself about what I wore and why s/he looked at me, whether I wore too much lipstick and why s/he looked at me...When I wear shorts in the spring and summer, I hear aunts and uncles murmuring at me. I didn't encounter such things when I was in İzmir. I was very surprised when a person was judged because of the shorts they wore or the tights they wore – UU1 -

Good geographical location of the city. The geographical location of Uşak was an important factor in participants' university preferences. In particular, the proximity of Uşak to major metropolitan cities such as Ankara, Izmir and Eskişehir stood out as an attractive factor for students. Access to these cities would provide students with the opportunity to easily participate in cultural events, job opportunities and various social activities. The results of the research showed that the proximity to these cities played an important role in students' university preferences.

Also, another important finding of the study was that students preferred universities in western provinces if their scores were not enough for universities in big cities. This showed that students shaped their university preferences not only based on academic dimensions but also on geographical location. They believed that the opportunities offered by universities in western provinces like Uşak were especially important for students to reach their career goals and enrich their social lives.

Another noteworthy point in the research was that some made their preferences with the guidance of their families as UU to find more academic and social opportunities. In particular, two of the participants who had previously studied in eastern provinces and who wanted to benefit from the opportunities offered at universities in western provinces preferred Uşak with the support of their families. Moreover, an interesting example mentioned in the research was the preference process of one of the medical students. This student made his preference completely department-oriented and learned about the location of the university in a conversation with a friend before coming to the university. During the preference process, he thought of UU in the Black Sea Region with the connotation that the word “uşak” frequently means “child” in the Black Sea Region. This participant stated that he could not forget the shock when he learned in a conversation with a friend that UU was located in the Aegean Region, not in the Black Sea Region.

All these findings suggest that the factors shaping students' university choices are diverse and that not only academic achievement but also geographical location of universities. Therefore, multiple perspectives need to be considered to understand the complexity of the university choice process and to find solutions that suit students' needs.

Dominant influence of political groups. This study results showed that certain political views were prominent in the city, as a result, students were pressured. Especially in university settings, these political groups could be influential among students. Some participants reported being pressured by these groups and having to hide their personal political opinions and ethnicity. Especially the students from the eastern part of Türkiye have felt obliged to hide their ethnic identity in order to avoid various problems. Inside and outside the university, these political groups often have had environments in which they have felt comfortable expressing their opinions. However, it was emphasized that defending different political views was difficult and challenging. These participants tried to avoid the risk of social exclusion or negative impact on their academic achievement by avoiding defending their different views. The interviews emphasized that differences and diversity should be supported in university environments. In addition, these efforts should be made to ensure an environment of free expression. For instance, one participant stated that:

> There are more political things happening here. For example, when I first came here in the first class, I was shocked. Believe me, I was shocked. Because I am against politics in a place like a university. Because there are a lot of people with different thoughts, there are a lot of people with different religious structures. There are many people with different ethnicities. But I had visibly seen the flags of a certain political group at the entrance of the campus – UU13 -

Economical friendly city than other western cities. Most of the participants stated that living in western cities was generally expensive, but Uşak was more affordable compared to the current economic conditions of Türkiye and other western cities. However, despite these economic advantages, they stated that they had difficulty living even in Uşak. They stated that they could foresee the difficulties of being a student in big cities based on their own economic experiences. However, the participants felt that the shopkeepers and the public in the city saw them only as a source of financial income and therefore had a negative attitude towards students. This finding revealed

that in addition to the economic difficulties experienced by students, social cohesion and acceptance were also significant problems. For example, one participant stated that:

> Uşak is a western city, but even though it is a western city, I came from the east, I came from the big city. At the same time, I thought that it was a more expensive city because I thought it was a western city and I could not adapt to it...I always call the city cheap cheap, but since I am a student, it is really important for the student – UU26 -

Newly establishment status of the university. The participants were aware that their universities were newer than many other universities. This led some participants to state that they were far from the expectation of having the advanced infrastructure and academic facilities offered by well-established universities. In addition, they thought that there might be a difference between the diploma obtained at well-established universities and graduating from their own university and that they might have missed out on some advantages. Some of them emphasized that they had to choose UU because they did not want to study at the campuses of some foundation universities in Istanbul, which were touted as building universities, and they could not win at well-established universities. This finding showed that institutional background and facilities were important factors in determining students' university preferences.

In addition, the participants stated that the university was opened with the logic of "make it up as you go along". According to some participants, the political actors in establishment of the university first focused on opening the department and then planned to overcome the obstacles that arose. However, it was revealed that the possible obstacles in this process were not considered in advance and that there was not enough planning to resolve them. In particular, the lack of a road map based on the experiences of well-established universities was a deficiency in terms of anticipating the difficulties that might be encountered and identifying solutions. This finding emphasized the importance of strategic planning and the ability to deal with obstacles in the management of newly-established universities.

Continuous increase in student quotas. An important point emphasized by the participants was that university quotas have been steadily increasing along with the number of university numbers in Türkiye. However, this increase in quotas also has

negative effects on students' university experiences. In particular, overcrowded classrooms, difficulties in enrolling in targeted courses due to limited quotas, and the inability to take some courses led to a decrease in the quality of education for students. In addition, the large number of students increased the possibility of students extending their semesters because of not registering the courses with limited quotas. This led to practical difficulties, such as inadequate summer schools and difficulties when there were not enough quotas. In addition, students faced bureaucratic obstacles in course substitution from different universities. These findings revealed that the increase in university quotas had a direct impact on students' educational experiences and academic success.

Some participants expressed concerns that the increase in the minimum passing score for university entrance exams and the subsequent expansion of quotas for certain programs might negatively impact their job prospects. They feared that with larger numbers of graduates from these programs entering the job market, competition for positions in their field would intensify. They thought that potentially it might lead to greater difficulty for employment. For example, one participant stated that:

> I was studying accounting before and I dropped out. You can't get somewhere by working in industry or anywhere else because I want a good future. My goal is to be a governmental employee, that is, to work in the public sector. The path of accounting was not open. Also, due to the removal of the threshold, everyone chooses accounting to study. Since it is a small department, everyone wants to be an accountant. The job finding rate is very low. That's why I switched to finance -UU9-

4.1.3.1.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of academic engagement, four sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) academic staff, (II) teaching, (III) infrastructure and resources, and (IV) academic culture.

4.1.3.1.2.1. Academic Staff

In terms of academic staff, the findings of UU case can be divided into five parts named as (i) communication problems of academic staff, (ii) lack of competent academic staff, (iii) need of teaching performance evaluation for academic staff, (iv)

difficulty in catching up new technologies, (v) guiding students in line with their interests and abilities.

Communication problems with academic staff. Communication problems with faculty members emerged as a serious source of discomfort from the statements of some of the participants. They stated that they were particularly concerned about faculty members' uncertain scheduling of class hours and failure to inform students in a timely manner. This situation negatively has affected students' preparation for classes and might reduce their academic performance. For example, one participant stated that:

> Academic things change according to the instructors. Some instructors think a lot about the students, some don't think about the students at all. Some instructors arbitrarily cancel the class 10 minutes and 15 minutes before the lesson. Something is heard on social media that I can't come to class due to illness. Students get up in the morning and come to class, but the class is canceled. We experience this situation very often – UU34 -

In addition, some students stated that they were not informed that classes would not be held due to faculty members' lack of communication. It has disrupted students' plans and negatively affected their daily lives. According to the results of the research, it was stated that some faculty members exhibited insulting and humiliating attitudes towards students. This situation caused students to be psychologically and emotionally affected negatively. Moreover, although students reported their problems to the heads of departments, it was observed that these complaints were inconclusive and no permanent solution could be found. These findings suggested that university administrations needed to develop more effective policies to improve student-faculty communication and to increase student satisfaction. For instance, two participants stated that:

> The fact that professors see themselves as superior prevents them from communicating with students. How is it a problem? For example, we are students, why would a professor talk to a sophomore student and a professor talk to a student because it is structured with this idea. We cannot communicate much with the professors themselves, but the professors whose classes we attend can be very sensitive. There are also very good ones, but most of them are not like that.
>
> Our academics seem insincere to me. Five students passed the exam, including me. But to other friends, he made sentences like “It is a pity for the money your

> family gave, stop studying at university". I don't know how right it is to take a class with such an academic. I really want to drop out the university. Sometimes I think it is a pity for my family. I really think, am I studying for nothing? The reaction of our academic was very bad. Most people don't go to that academic's class anymore, even though it is one of our most important course. My friends avoid going to that class – UU9 -

Lack of competent academic staff. According to this study, some participants frequently stated that professors were academically inadequate in their university experiences and that changes should be made in the staff. In particular, it has been observed that students' learning gaps have occurred as a result of academic staff not having sufficient competence in their fields. These deficiencies were realized in the next class when other courses were taught. This situation caused students to struggle academically and had to make more effort to close their learning gaps.

It was also stated that lecturers from outside the field ignored the differences in their own fields and their lectures were more superficial. In other words, faculty members from different faculties were perceived to lecture at a higher level and in less detail. In sum, it was observed that part-time lecturers from different had difficulty in balancing the learning needs of the relevant department. This situation caused students to think that the in-depth knowledge transfer they expected from the courses was not realized.

In some cases, the deanship or the relevant unit have assigned teachers from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), who had partial knowledge of the course, as course instructors because the university did not have enough faculty members, especially professors. This raised serious questions about quality of academic staff among students. Because these teachers from MoNE were usually not specialized in the assigned course fields and had limited experience in teaching at the university level. The participants expected the lecturers to be specialized in their fields and to had deep knowledge and experience. It was unclear whether these teachers had the skills to teach at the university level, as well as the experience to understand students' needs and provide them with appropriate education. In general, it is emphasized that in order to improve students' learning experiences, academic staff should be reviewed and competent academic staff should be assigned to courses.

Need for teaching performance evaluation for academic staff. The participants expected that their own performance in the course should be evaluated and that certain

criteria for passing the course should also apply to faculty members. This expectation emphasized that the evaluation of faculty members' own teaching performance played a critical role in the process of self-improvement and renewal. However, despite these expectations of students, some lecturers' unpreparedness for lectures, sometimes inadequate oratory skills, fast-paced lectures and uncertainty of topics caused students to experience problems in their course experience. They were also concerned that if lecturers failed to answer students' questions clearly and used indirect methods of expression, their questions might remain unanswered and they might not fully understand the course content.

These situations emerged as important factors affecting students' course experiences. In particular, it was vital for faculty members to be prepared for the course and to convey the course content with effective communication skills in order to increase student satisfaction. In this context, faculty members need to review and improve their own performance in order to meet student expectations and improve the learning environment. However, in this scope, there was some examples for evaluation of teaching performance in the Faculty of Medicine. For example, one participant stated that:

> They give us two feedback forms. One about the courses given by the academics and the other about the relationship between the questions asked in the exams and the courses. What the students say is taken seriously. There is a separate evaluation form for each academic. How was the course, was it understandable, did it answer the student's questions? We realized that this was really taken seriously and not just done for the sake of doing it. Last year a professor's department was changed or something like that, so these forms were taken into consideration -UU7 -

Difficulty in catching up new technologies. The participants emphasized the difficulties of faculty members in following and using new technologies. In this context, it was observed that there were weaknesses in faculty members' interpretation and application skills in emerging technology areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), meta verse technologies. They experienced uncertainty about the usability of AI tools, especially in assignments and projects related to these technologies. This uncertainty led faculty members to constantly doubt whether students' assignments and projects were really done by their own efforts or with the help of AI tools. Faculty members' insecurities arising from this situation might lead them to develop negative attitudes

and prejudices towards students. In addition, it is stated that students could adapt to the rapid development of technology faster than faculty members, which led to communication gaps and conflicts. In this context, it was critical that more effort should be made to ensure technological adaptation in student-faculty relations and to improve the technological skills of faculty members.

Guiding students in line with their interests and abilities. The findings emphasized the importance of sincere and supportive conversations that students have with faculty members. Few reported that such interactions put them at ease and encouraged them to talk about their career plans. The fact that faculty members listened to students' career goals and clearly express their intention to support them made themselves feel valued. These interactions increased students' motivation, helping them to focus on their career goals and take the necessary steps. These participants also reported that such conversations gave them a more positive outlook towards the future and increased their confidence in their academic success. Therefore, the participants' discourses underlined the importance of intimate interactions with faculty members, which contributed positively to students' academic and personal development.

4.1.3.1.2.2. Teaching

In terms of teaching, the findings of UU case can be divided into nine parts named as (i) theory-oriented or memories-oriented courses, (ii) creation of course contents based on exams for public appointments, (iii) power of field courses over elective courses, (iv) crossing contents under different courses, (v) use of limited teaching techniques, (vi) different evaluation mechanisms, (vii) ineffectiveness of online teaching, (viii) tendency to cheat in online exams, and (ix) internship experiences regarding professional life.

Theory-oriented or memories-oriented courses. According to the findings of the study, the participants stated that they could not internalize what was taught because the courses were theoretically oriented and did not create enough awareness in terms of practice. In particular, it was stated that students did not know how to use the knowledge in the field and how to apply it in practice. It was emphasized that when they went to internship, the theoretical knowledge was not sufficiently transferred to

practice and therefore they could not completely master the internship process, but at least they wanted to have information about how the process worked.

In addition, participants, especially those studying social sciences, stated that some of academic members lectured on their own memories, which made it difficult for them to clearly understand the subject matter. They stated that they had difficulty in distinguishing the memoirs of the lecturers from the course content. It was thought that they only came to the lectures to listen to the life stories of the lecturers. These students thought that this situation caused the courses to deviate from their purpose and negatively affected the learning process. The lecturers' focus on their own memories might cause deviation from the main topic of the lecture and made it difficult for students to understand the subject. They would like to see more interactive and participatory lectures, less lecturing based on their own individual memories, and more focus on the course content. For example, one participant stated that:

> I don't understand my instructors because they go by fast, sometimes I don't understand whether they are lecturing, chatting, talking about their experiences. I don't understand most of the things they talk about in class – UU1 -

Creation of course contents based on exams for public appointments. It was observed that the participants categorized the courses they took in line with their goals of being appointed to public institutions after graduation. Thus, they have focused on exams such as Public Personnel Selection Exam (KPSS), Medical Specialty Education Entrance Exam (TUS), and Dentistry Specialization Education Entrance Exam (DUS) to obtain job opportunities in public institutions. As a result of these priorities, it has been determined that students were faced with the situation of listening to and understanding the courses with a focus on KPSS, TUS, and DUS, but not really internalizing them. For example, one participant stated that:

> In general, all of the academics lecture through presentations. One instructor teaches the contents theoretically, which is a troublesome, in addition that instructor asks in an extremely difficult way the exams that will not be useful both in KPSS and when we become teachers after we are appointed. It motivates us to fail us the class – UU5 -

They have exhibited a tendency to listen to these types of exams-oriented courses. In other words, they have paid more attention to the lectures that would appear in these

exams. In addition, they also stated that some academic staff omitted the topics that were not included in the scope of the exams when preparing the course syllabus. It was also found that some lecturers tried to emphasize the important parts of the courses that might be asked in the exams and tried to draw students' attention to these topics.

> Our courses are good, there are block courses…The lessons are taught well, the lessons are efficient, everything is explained. KPSS exams are kept up with and questions are solved for KPSS – UU14 -

According to the findings of the study, while some participants were satisfied with the way teaching was done in line with their career goals, a group of students stated that they were very uncomfortable with this approach. In particular, they pointed out that the creation of course content with the aim of being appointed to the public sector limited learning. These students emphasized that their university education was not only for the purpose of achieving success in an exam such as KPSS and therefore the courses should be approached from a broader perspective.

This particular group of students thought that if their learning experience was only exam-oriented, it could lead to a lack of in-depth understanding and conceptual richness. They argued that the purpose of coming to university and the purpose of education was not only to pass a specific exam, but also to graduate as individuals equipped with a wide range of knowledge. These students demanded that faculty members encourage conceptual understanding and in-depth learning rather than an exam-oriented approach.

As participants noted, the exam-oriented approach to teaching at the university led to inadequate classroom discussions. These students stated that in-depth discussions and conceptual understanding were not sufficiently developed because the courses were focused only on preparation for exams. This situation showed that in-class discussions usually remained on the surface. In addition, it was seen that students focused on memorizing information for exams instead of understanding the subjects in depth.

Power of field courses over elective courses. According to the findings of the study, most of the students considered the field courses more valuable than the elective courses and the compulsory courses of CoHE. These students thought that the contents of CoHE's compulsory courses such as Atatürk Principles and History of Turkish

Revolution and Turkish Language were the same as what they had learned in middle and high school education levels. They characterized these courses as a waste of time. They also stated that they developed more belonging to the department and contributed more to their professional development while listening to the field courses, whereas they could not understand to what extent other elective courses would contribute. These students expressed that they felt as if taking some elective courses was an obligation to complete European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits.

Moreover, some participants were uncomfortable with the concentration of field courses in the later years of the university. They expressed that they were unhappy that they did not take courses related to their departments in the first years. Especially the participants in Faculty of Education criticized and saw it as unnecessary to take higher level courses that they would not teach in their professional working life. They thought that such an academic challenge would not be useful in their professional lives. These students expected that especially pure field courses should be removed completely and teaching techniques and skills should be focused on. These findings revealed the students' perceptions and expectations regarding course selection and program structure in university education.

Moreover, some participants were deprived of taking courses that did not develop them professionally under an interdisciplinary perspective revealed an important problem regarding course identification in university education. According to this perception, the fact that students had to take some compulsory courses or elective courses caused them to spend time and resources in areas that were not suitable for their professional interests and goals. This was perceived as limiting their opportunities to choose courses that were particularly suited to their career goals and to develop their professional skills. For example, an architecture participant stated that the history course he took was unnecessary, which prevented him from focusing his time and energy on a different field instead of developing his architectural skills. This showed that students have perceived an interdisciplinary approach in a negative way. They found it difficult to make connections between different disciplines. From similar perspective, one participant from the Faculty of Medicine stated that:

> I am studying at the Faculty of Medicine; we take heavy enough courses. Besides, there are too many unnecessary courses. There is too much unnecessary information, for example public health or public ethics. These are courses that will not be useful for us as doctors. I would like such courses to be a little more refined. I would like to be trained to be a doctor. Yes, we are students, we need to learn other things, but we are students who have reached a certain level in high school, but I would only want to study medicine. I would not want to take other courses -UU11 -

Crossing contents under different courses. The content of the courses they have taken at university showed a homogeneity that could lead to boredom and demotivation. When students found similarities between various courses, especially when they saw the same topics covered in courses offered under different names, they lost the sense of diversity and novelty they expected from their educational experience. This led to a feeling of not being able to explore their field in depth, while at the same time reducing the effectiveness of the learning process and motivation to learn. The participants were aware that there might be similarities and crossing points due to the fact that the courses might be related to each other. However, it was evident that a great deal of repetition and homogeneity in the course content hindered the motivation necessary to enrich learning experiences and acquire new knowledge. Therefore, participants expected their universities to diversify course content and helped students to have a deeper and richer learning experience. For example, two participants stated that:

> We can take more different courses. The courses based on the department can be given. We see the same thing in all courses, political science, political sociology, political communication, etc. We have been seeing these for 4 years, but when we look at it, we don't see anything difference - UU28 -

> Sometimes I take a physiology course, I say, is this a medical biology course? Which course I take, sometimes I get confused, they all come out somewhere. Right now, the teaching of the academics, the content of the courses are similar because it is medicine, because it is the human body. I constantly feel like I see the same thing in every course, those courses revolve around a certain framework – UU7 -

Use of limited teaching techniques. Course experiences were often shaped by the limitations of academic members' teaching methods and approaches. They emphasized that courses often delivered lecturing through presentations, but these presentations were often mundane and monotonous. In particular, some instructors'' reliance on old course materials rather than current sources and the use of very dated presentations

caused concerns among students about the lack of up-to-date information. This revealed that old and passive teaching methods still exist, such as instructors reading sentences directly from a book and expecting students to write them down in their notebooks, as experienced by a participant from the Faculty of Communication. Such approaches led students to conclude that they expected participation and interaction in courses but did not find it. For example, one participant stated that:

> The instructors are constantly dictating notes in the courses. For example, we were writing a lot in one course. I remember I wrote six pages in a one-hour course, which is the least we wrote in this course. Last time, we said that they should give us the slide and we should write from the slide. But she reads from the book, we write what she reads. What can I understand from this? -UU1 -

On the other hand, some participants, especially those studying in fields such as medicine and dentistry, were pleased that theoretically oriented courses were delivered through presentations. These students reported that due to the intensity of the course content, lecturers' presentations are concise and clear, making it easy to study and promoting lasting learning. However, there were also rare cases where different teaching techniques were used. Some academic members made efforts to increase interaction among students. Such teaching approaches appeared to encourage students to participate more enthusiastically in the courses and to promote permanent learning rather than memorization.

While some of the academics were observed to use effective teaching strategies to make the lessons interesting, it is noteworthy that some of them did not lecture at all by having students make presentations to them. Such academics might prefer to make the learning process student-centered by having students research and present topics among themselves. This approach could help students develop critical thinking, research and presentation skills. However, it should be noted that for some students, this approach did not be effective and created the feeling that the course content was not adequately conveyed.

Moreover, the fact that some of the participants resorted to online platforms such as YouTube to cover course gaps sometimes led to reluctance and loss of motivation in the classroom environment. They believed that the knowledge learned in the classroom was already available on platforms such as YouTube and that the same content could

be presented in a different and more effective way than YouTube. This reinforced students' perception that the classroom environment was not suitable for their learning needs and reduces engagement. In particular, students' belief that the activities or presentations in the classroom were similar to the content available on YouTube reinforced the feeling that the time spent in the classroom was wasted.

Different evaluation mechanisms. It was observed that faculty members generally relied on certain strategies in grading students. One of these strategies was a mechanism that focused on written exams. Especially in practical courses, including laboratory work, experiment reports were widely used. The majority of the instructors assessed students through midterm and final exams, which usually include multiple-choice questions. However, some faculty members preferred open-ended questions to assess students' analytical thinking and in-depth understanding. Such questions have given students the opportunity to use their skills of analyzing, synthesizing and critical thinking rather than just recalling information. These findings suggested that there was diversity in faculty members' grading strategies, with some preferring more participatory and enriching assessment methods. For example, one participant stated that:

> In universities in general, I do not find it very correct to have only written exams because what everyone focuses on is different. The major I want to focus on is very different from the major someone else wants to focus on. The subjects in terms of the course I will be interested in are very different, the subjects that my other friend will focus on are different. So, I think it cannot be measured equally. I think there should be something other than a written exam – UU21 -

Some participants generally agreed that multiple-choice exams were a fair assessment method. Some of the academics who asked open-ended questions gave feedback to the students during the evaluation process. However, when answering such open-ended questions, students worried that they would not get good grades if they were not written in line with the instructors' own ideas. In fact, some thought that the open-ended exams were not read at all. They claimed that some instructors gave grades based on an overview of the papers without reading the answers. This undermined students' trust in the exams.

A participant from the Faculty of Islamic Sciences said that his friend had explained Galatasaray's championship to an open-ended question and received a high grade as a result. Such experiences undermined students' trust in open-ended exams and raised doubts about the fairness of the assessment process. These findings reflected students' expectations of fairness and transparency in the assessment of open-ended exams.

Assessment mechanisms differed between faculties. In general, midterm and final-based systems were preferred, while the academics in the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Communication preferred to assess students through alternative methods such as presentations and projects. The participants in the Faculty of Education reported that they gained self-confidence and strengthened their communication skills while making presentations. This method helped them to improve their ability to prepare, to communicate information effectively and to receive feedback. In addition, the students who had the opportunity to express themselves during the presentation felt freer and more confident. This allowed them to take a more active role in the lessons and contributed more to the learning process.

In Faculty of Medicine, assessment was carried out through committees. Students were held responsible for all courses before taking written exams, and with the recent change, questions were mixed without being categorized by course. The exams were conducted electronically in computer laboratories and successful students were also assessed orally. Oral examination was usually in the form of case analysis. While medical students were evaluated their semester success on a course-by-course basis, dental students were similarly assessed in written and oral exams. However, when dental students failed a course, they could not take any courses of the next semester. This situation showed that students in the Faculty of Dentistry were under pressure to succeed in all the courses they took in the semester.

It was observed that two different methods, open jury and closed jury, were preferred in the process of evaluating students' projects at the Faculty of Architecture. In the open jury method, students had the opportunity to explain their projects one-on-one to the jury and received direct feedback about their projects. In this method, students had the chance to convey the details of their projects and their thoughts to the jury members. However, in the closed jury method, students submitted their projects and

all their materials to the jury members. They stated that they were graded according to the emphasis they want to make in their projects.

There were differences between open jury and closed jury methods. In open juries, it was thought that this method was more effective because students had the opportunity to explain themselves, despite facing harsh criticism of their projects from faculty members. This provided students with the ability to defend and discuss their projects, as well as the opportunity to receive feedback and be open to improvement. On the other hand, the fact that students did not have the opportunity to explain their thoughts and projects in the closed jury method was seen as a disadvantage. These findings showed how different approaches to evaluation processes in the Faculty of Architecture affected the student experience.

In general, it was quite common for faculty members to use grades as an element of pressure and to intimidate students with grades and failing courses. Such behaviors created communication barriers between students and negatively affected students' relationships with faculty members. However, students were aware that despite such threats, faculty members passed the students from courses using inflated grades. While this created insecurity and anxiety among students, it also showed that grades did not reflect the actual level of learning. The participants observed that despite receiving low grades, they did not fail their courses due to inflated grades. While these findings emphasized the importance of a fair approach to academic evaluations, they also suggested that faculty members needed to review their grading strategies.

Ineffectiveness of online teaching. For many participants, the online learning experience was initially new and exciting. Over time, however, the experience could become boring or tiring. Initially, although it offered advantages such as flexibility and convenience, and the ability to follow the courses whenever and wherever they wanted, it also presented challenges such as lack of social interaction, lack of motivation, technical problems or distractions.

> It was nice to take online courses at times. First of all, there was no time limit, we shaped it according to what we wanted. Since we were more comfortable in the course because it is not in a classroom environment, we can listen more comfortably because we get enough our sleep. However, we could not ask the

> instructors about our difficulties afterwards. There were times when we could not communicate with the instructors – UU17 -

The majority of the participants emphasized the difficulty of emergent remote teaching experiences in the online period. These students stated that they experienced the difficulty of the adaptation process of moving away from the habit of taking face-to-face courses. The students who were introduced to online learning for the first time in their own teaching experiences were faced with the uncertainty of this process and not knowing how to proceed. These students were concerned about the new dynamics and requirements they would encounter when they moved away from traditional classroom environments and started learning on digital platforms. In particular, they faced uncertainties about how the technologies to be used in online education would work, how the courses would be organized, and how communication channels would be established. There was also a lack of knowledge about how to present instructional materials and how to assess students in online learning. For example, one participant stated that:

> Online period was a strange period. I didn't feel like a university student at that time. I felt like I was in high school 5. It wasn't like a university at all. It was very strange. The academics were explaining things, but the courses were always theoretically oriented – UU32 -

Therefore, they also felt that the quality of teaching decreased significantly during this period and that they lost an important period in their university life. In fact, the participants stated that similar adaptation difficulties continued after the pandemic like in the beginning of university life. Some evaluated the online period as ineffective in terms of learning and teaching. These findings explained in detail the negative effects of online education on students. Factors such as the difficulties experienced by students during the adaptation process, the ineffectiveness of online courses and the low quality of teaching constituted an important part of the educational experiences during the pandemic.

In online courses, faculty members had less time for student questions, which was an important factor that negatively affected students' learning experience. Especially in the case of large classes, it was difficult to devote enough time to students' individual needs. Students were hesitant to ask questions due to the less accessibility of instructors online. Not being able to get to know the university environment during the

pandemic and not understanding the expectations of the academic members are among the difficulties faced by students. Since communication and interaction were limited in the online environment, it was more difficult for students to adapt to university life and the requirements of the courses. This could cause students to feel lost or uncertain, leading to delays in the learning process.

In addition, the difficulty of studying in the family home during the online period was also an important struggle. Since the home environment was often distracting, students had problems focusing on the courses. In addition, factors such as family members sharing the study environment or noise in the home also reduced students' study efficiency. This situation caused students to face difficulties in the learning process and lose motivation.

Tendency to cheat in online exams. Lack of intrinsic motivation was one of the underlying reasons for the lack of effort on the part of most of the participants to understand and learn the courses in the online period. In particular, the motivational difficulties experienced by students who were only extrinsically motivated in the online education process led to various problems. Since these students focused only on extrinsic goals such as passing the courses, they were not sufficiently engaged in the learning process and focused on passing the exams instead of understanding the courses. This could lead students to resort to unethical behaviors such as cheating on exams.

These participants tried various ways to cheat in online exams and tried to succeed based on external pressure. In particular, using platforms such as WhatsApp to communicate with other classmates during online exams, having other people solve the relevant exams or surfing on the Internet to find answers during the exam were frequently preferred. However, such behaviors caused temporary success and deprive students of a real learning experience. As a result of such behaviors, students followed many courses with the sole purpose of passing the exam. These findings suggested that the lack of motivation in the online education process led students to resort to unethical behaviors and deprived them of the real learning experience.

Internship experiences regarding professional life. It was frequently stated by most of the participants that the internships contributed more than the courses. Internships

provided students with practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge and helped to develop professional skills. However, sometimes there is a mismatch between theoretical courses and internships. Some participants sometimes failed to make a connection between the theoretical courses they took at the university and the practical applications at the internship. In fact, they sometimes emphasized that the theoretical framework contradicted the practices at the internship site. This situation prevented students from realizing the full potential of their internship experience. For instance, one participant stated that:

> I am a journalism student. I was also doing freelance journalism. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't done an internship in the summer. I have been working in the sector for 2 years, I learned how to write news from the sector…I didn't know how to write newspaper news and internet news before my internship. Most of my friends in the class don't know either. We are taught things outside our field – UU1 -

Doing internships in different places each semester had an important role in seeing the advantages and differences. Different internship locations provided students with the opportunity to get to know a variety of work environments, sectors and professions. This enabled students to gain a broad perspective and made more informed decisions about their careers. In addition, working in different internship locations also improved their adaptability and ability to adapt to new environments. In addition, the participants' acquaintance with the concepts of bureaucracy and legal procedures during the internship process was an important finding that affected their professional development. This showed that students' internship experiences were not only limited to technical knowledge and skills, but they also encountered the complex structures and legal regulations of the business world. This kind of experience contributed to students' professional knowledge and skills as well as their knowledge about the functioning of the business world. For instance, one participant stated that:

> I would like it to be compulsory from the internship practices, we need to gain a little more experience professionally. Theoretical knowledge is not enough, we need to learn how to apply it, we need to gain experience in some way. At least we can learn by watching from the outside, even if not with a one-on-one session, at least by being in that field, we can learn the rules, regulations, legal framework – UU23 -

Leaving the internship courses to last semesters before graduation had negatively affected students' processes of belonging to their departments and getting to know the

sector closely. This was especially evident in the Faculty of Education. Internships were extremely important in terms of providing students with professional experience and enabling them to learn real-world applications. However, the postponement of internship courses to last semesters seems to have limited the opportunity for students to benefit from these experiences and get to know the department at an earlier stage. It stood out as an important finding that participants in the Faculty of Education did not receive enough support from the faculty members in the internship. It showed inadequacy of faculty members in monitoring and guiding interns. In addition, it supported that students were deprived of the guidance and support they needed to make their internship experiences more productive and improve their professional skills.

The participants studying in technical fields such as engineering and architecture reported some challenges in terms of internships. These students emphasized that because Uşak was a small city and did not receive the necessary support in terms of investment, the opportunities for students to establish relations with the sector and gain practical experience were limited. They also stated that the infrastructure and laboratory facilities of engineering and architecture programs in Uşak were more restricted compared to educational institutions in big cities. This led to students not receiving the necessary and sufficient field knowledge and having fewer opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. As a result, it was important to take into account that studying engineering in small cities might bring some professional challenges.

In addition, the participants from Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry serving as interns in university hospitals expressed that during their internship period, they worked in the hospital setting almost as much as a graduated doctor. They felt they were truly immersed in professional work life and highly value this experience for their future careers. However, despite their dedication and sacrifices, they underlined the lack of financial compensation for their efforts. They mentioned that with a recent law, interns received only one-third of the minimum wage as payment for their services. While they appreciated the existence of this financial support, they also emphasized its inadequacy.

4.1.3.1.2.3. Infrastructure and Resources

In terms of infrastructure and resources, the findings of UU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings, (ii) good study halls and limited printed resources, (iii) inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment, and (iv) limitations of technological infrastructure.

Physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings. As the university's quotas increased, problems such as insufficient classrooms and the lack of buildings reflecting the students' own identities in their faculties became a significant source of discomfort among students. Although the participants preferred to take courses in large lecture halls before starting university, after their experience they realized that courses with fewer students were more effective. Smaller classes allowed for a more personalized learning experience and allowed students to interact more closely with faculty members.

It was also problematic that some faculties did not have their own buildings, although they had their own identities. For example, the use of the Faculty of Communication by the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences limited the opportunities for their students to meet and interact with students from other grade levels in their departments. Similarly, although there was the Faculty of Health Sciences, the students of this faculty used the classrooms and buildings of the Faculty of Medicine or the Faculty of Social Sciences. It reduced the opportunities for health sciences students to interact with other students in their field. It was revealed that medical faculty students had a similar experience. The Faculty of Medicine building and laboratories were newly constructed and the faculty had reached its own building two years ago, but the faculty, which was to have its first graduates in the year of the research, started to admit students six years ago. During this period, the medical faculty students temporarily used the Faculty of Fine Arts building.

These participants could not rationalize the opening of the faculty and enrolling students despite the lack of a faculty building. This situation undermined the trust of the participants in these faculties in their departments and faculties. It seemed to have had a negative impact on the prestige of the faculty. These participants were disappointed when they were unable to access and learn from the experiences of

students in other grades due to the lack of their own building. They perceived this as a significant shortcoming. Such barriers seemed to prevent students from having a comprehensive university experience and benefiting from a variety of perspectives.

Good study halls and limited printed resources. The participants expressed satisfaction that the study areas in the library were adequate and spacious. The students found the availability of rooms for individual and group studies positive, but stated that they had difficulty finding a place only during midterm and final weeks. The library was open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing flexibility in meeting students' study needs. In addition, the group study rooms were available for reservation, giving students the opportunity to study in a planned and quiet environment. The suitability of these rooms for group work also met the needs of students to collaborate and work on projects. They also requested an increase in the number of such rooms for group work and projects.

It is important to note that participants were able to access digital resources. This shows that the digitalization of the university and the internet facilitate access to information. The fact that they stated that they did not have any problems in accessing the resources they needed by accessing the library databases of other universities revealed the opportunity provided by the university's digital platforms. However, some of the participants mentioned the inadequacy of printed resources. They had the problems in accessing books that were not available in electronic form. This emphasized the need to expand and update library archives.

Inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment. The participants of the study expressed their discomfort with the fact that the faculty buildings were constructed after the admission of students to the departments. However, they stated that with the construction of the faculty buildings, their access to laboratory facilities increased and the laboratories were equipped with new and up-to-date equipment and devices. Despite the discomfort caused by the late construction of the faculty buildings, the participants stated that the subsequent equipping of these buildings with modern laboratories contributed positively to their educational quality. They emphasized that the new laboratory facilities made it possible for students to gain practical experience and develop projects using current technology.

However, with the ever-increasing student quotas at their universities, the concern that the existing laboratories might be insufficient was expressed by participants studying in applied departments. This was especially the case with the increase in student enrollment quotas of their departments. It was thought that the existing laboratory facilities would not be sufficient to meet the increasing number of students. They concerned about possible negative effects of this policy on quality of education.

In addition, the participant studying in the field of dentistry stated that there was no problem in terms of laboratory equipment, but that they had financial difficulties in obtaining consumables. The participant emphasized that they procured the consumables used in the laboratories with their own means during their dental education. As understood, UU did not provide any financial support. This participant stated that students' budgets were negatively affected, especially due to the depletion of some frequently used products and the need to constantly purchase new consumables. Considering the importance of laboratory studies and the necessity of consumables, especially in a practice-oriented field such as dentistry, it was clear that this situation has negatively affected the financial situation of students.

Limitations of technological infrastructure. Some participants stated that the technological infrastructure at the university was inadequate. This situation negatively affected the quality of education. In particular, not using the technological tools required by the age in the courses and not integrating web-based tools into teaching processes were among the prominent problems. It caused students' interaction with technology to be limited and deprives them of the skills required by the age.

Another important finding of the research was that artificial intelligence training and other advanced technological subjects should be included in the university curriculum. They underlined that the world was becoming increasingly digitalized. In addition, the role of technologies such as artificial intelligence has been increasing.

According to the findings of the study, they expected web tools and iPads to be integrated into the teaching process and technology-supported courses to be offered more widely. In particular, digital platforms would provide easy access to course materials and the use of interactive learning tools to enrich learning experiences. In addition, these participants expected more frequent practices such as inviting guest

well-known speakers of their fields in national and international levels to face-to-face classes via video conference tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype.

Some of the participants perceived the digital sharing platforms of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to be better than UU. They mentioned the Education Information Network (EBA), which they used during their high school education. EBA was a platform developed by the MoNE that provided digital educational materials to K-12 students in Türkiye. The students could access lectures, question solutions, interactive learning materials and course content through EBA. It was stated that these resources provided by EBA in high school supported students' education and enriched their learning experiences. At this point, it was emphasized that similar opportunities should be offered at the university level. In particular, it was suggested to create digital platforms that offer the opportunity to share and interact about the courses. In this way, students would be able to quickly access the resources they want, as well as increase communication and collaboration with other university students in their class sections or departments and academic members. This suggestion was considered as an important step towards strengthening the digital infrastructure in the academic field and making learning experiences more effective.

4.1.3.1.2.4. Academic Culture

In terms of academic culture, the findings of UU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) lack of internationalization efforts, (ii) graduate education plans, (iii) inability to compete with well-established universities, and (iv) career planning and development.

Lack of internationalization efforts. According to the findings, it was been found that students experienced deficiencies in internationalization. In particular, it was determined that students had problems with foreign language teaching. Although students understood the necessity of learning a foreign language, they expressed the difficulties they faced in foreign language learning. The necessity of knowing a second foreign language in addition to English in today's job market was emphasized, but they stated that they could not find enough opportunities for foreign language learning at the university. For example, one participant stated that:

> Actually, it could be a bit of an incentive for English learning because there are a lot of people who really want to improve their English. Right now, I really want to improve my English but I don't know how to do it, and I think it would be very helpful if they organize things that could help people a little bit – UU5 -

CoHE's compulsory foreign language courses were conducted online as a formality and the content of the course was insufficient. The participants stated that it was difficult for them to develop their foreign language skills with only compulsory foreign language courses of this structure and content in their undergraduate programs. Especially in the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, it was emphasized that Arabic preparatory education was compulsory. The students from imam hatip high schools stated that they were able to improve their foreign language level to some extent due to their previous Arabic language learning. However, it was observed that students who did not come from imam hatip high schools could not get enough efficiency from Arabic foreign language education at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences. These participants said that a deep understanding of Arabic was necessary to grasp not only the meanings of words, but also their contexts of use, grammatical structures and cultural context. Therefore, they have expected a comprehensive learning process that includes grammar, vocabulary and cultural context to effectively learn and understand Arabic. One participant stated that:

> I think it is very important to communicate with different countries. For example, I would like a theology faculty in Indonesia to have a connection with a university in Indonesia. In the same way, I would like to go to different countries and talk about the department we can talk about there, whether it is about different topics. I would like to create a space where we can discuss with people in different countries, even about a book – UU30 -

Furthermore, some emphasized the need to increase Erasmus opportunities, while others thought that the short-term nature of Erasmus programs might have some shortcomings regarding their development. In order to improve their foreign language learning, some participants dreamed of spending half of their university life in Türkiye and the other half in a university abroad with which their university would cooperate. However, it was underlined that financial support should be provided by the government at this point. A few of the participants demanded that at least opportunities such as trips abroad should be offered. Stating that it was difficult for them to go abroad due to their socio-economic status, these participants expected universities to

mediate in breaking down social class barriers to go abroad. Academically, these findings emphasized the importance of international cooperation and equal social opportunities. For example, one participant stated that:

Some participants valued attracting international academics to their universities and the opportunity to speak with English native speakers. In addition to contribution their foreign language skills, two of them also believed that the activities of international students and academics had the potential to mediate the process of de-racization through increased visibility of different backgrounds on the campus.

Graduate education plans. It is seen that the majority of the participants did not intend to continue graduate education after completing their undergraduate education. When asked why they did not want to continue graduate education, it was found that most of them did not have the opportunity to study in the undergraduate department of their choice and did not feel that they belonged to the undergraduate program they were studying. On the other hand, some participants not studying in their targeted undergraduate programs saw graduate education as an exit door to achieve their dreams. They wanted to change their fields via graduate education. They were interested in graduate programs in order to change their professional fields and pursue a career in fields they are closer to. For example, one participant stated that:

> I have anxiety for future and I am thinking of doing a master's degree. As I said, I did not come to the Department of Primary Education very willingly. Actually, as I said, I wanted study in the Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, but that's why I want to do a master's degree, but in this field – UU5 -

Furthermore, it was determined that the experiences conveyed by the faculty members in their departments were effective in the students' reluctance to continue graduate education. Academic problems such as negative experiences of academic members in their own academic journeys, research and publication pressure, centralized decisions, lack of financial support for academic projects, problems in appointment processes, problems in tenure promotion, and the postponement of faculty members' obtaining their own personal rights have demotivated the participants in terms of applying for graduate education.

Inability to compete with well-established universities. Nearly half of the participants were aware that their university was a newly established university. They thought that this situation took a backseat to well-established universities in terms of academic success and academic opportunities. They especially emphasized that it was difficult to compete with well-known institutions such as Boğaziçi University, Middle East Technical University and İstanbul Technical University. They contended that the nascent history of their universities did not necessarily translate to superior academic development. Furthermore, they emphasized that the academic achievements of incoming students to UU were not as high as those attending well-established institutions, which further complicated competition. Consequently, a trend of lowered academic expectations was observed among most of the participants, except for those in the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry. For example, one participant stated that:

> When I talked to someone, when I told them that I won at Uşak University, I get reactions like the things you want will not happen, you have to work hard. I get depressed. I want the automotive sector and I am working for it to learn the programs. I didn't tell any of the people which university I studied at in the first year because they made fun of me. They would make comments like "don't study anywhere until you study in Uşak, it will be useless". These comments alienated me from the university. For this reason, I wanted to take a break from university. I don't know if I can really catch up with the students at those good universities – UU6 -

The participants in Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry believed that they received education of similar quality to equivalent faculties in well-established universities. This perception suggested that they view the educational standards and resources available in their medical faculties as comparable to those in well-established institutions. However, the findings from the study revealed that the participants in these faculties perceived the education provided by their respective universities as inadequate preparation for significant examinations such as TUS and DUS. They emphasized the necessity of attending preparatory courses in private tutoring institutions, underscoring the importance of supplementary education outside the university environment for effective exam preparation. However, they thought that this situation was a reality not only for their university but also for medical faculties in all other universities in Türkiye. This assertion highlighted a prevailing sentiment among the students that university education alone did not adequately equip them for the rigors of these standardized examinations. Consequently, the perceived necessity of

external preparatory courses suggested a perceived deficiency in their academic journeys.

Career planning and development. The removal of entrance exam thresholds in university admissions has yielded complex ramifications, particularly evident in the escalation of enrollment rates within certain academic disciplines. Some participants in recent studies elucidated the multifaceted effects of this policy shift, highlighting its potential to disrupt traditional patterns of graduate employability.

With heightened accessibility to higher education, a concomitant surge in the number of graduates within specific fields would be ensued. This surge has precipitated concerns among graduates regarding their post-graduation prospects. Notably, these participants have underscored the adverse implications of heightened competition for employment opportunities within their respective fields. The influx of graduates into the job market has engendered a scenario characterized by intensified competition and constricted job prospects, particularly for recent graduates. Consequently, the removal of entrance exam thresholds had potential to accentuate the challenges faced by graduates in securing gainful employment commensurate with their qualifications. Therefore, many participants were concerned about employment prospects. Despite graduating, they believed to encounter difficulties in finding jobs. Consequently, they were turning to certificate programs to enhance their chances of employment. These programs could provide additional skills and competencies that may increase job opportunities in various sectors.

One of the important findings in this study was that the students enrolled in fields facing employment challenges were increasingly opting for pedagogical certification programs as a pathway to becoming teachers. In fact, they even stated that discussions about the abolition of this certificate program disrupted their future plans. However, this trend has sparked issues of equity among the students of Faculty of Education. Some participants from this faculty, despite entering university with higher entrance exam scores, perceived it as unfair that students from other disciplines can become teachers through certification programs. For example, this perception has led to questioning the differentiation between the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. For example, one participant stated that:

> Although there are graduates of the Faculty of Education, they also give those formation courses to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Then we say, what difference do we have from the Faculty of Arts and Science? It already takes us time to internalize this pedagogic formation courses for 4 years. The students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences take that formation training within 2 months or 3 months after the university ends. Then what difference do we have as students of the Faculty of Education? – UU19 -

4.1.3.1.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of psychological engagement, seven sub-themes are obtained. These seven sub-themes are called (I) differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities, (II) varied influences of family dynamics, (III) self-discovery, (IV) anxiety for the future and stress, (V) psychological wellbeing, (VI) need for psychological support services, and (VII) formation of mate selection criteria.

Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities. Many participants emphasized that prior to university life, most of individual responsibilities were shouldered by their families. They characterized their pre-university lives as primarily focused on academic pursuits, with their sole responsibility being to attend classes. However, upon encountering responsibilities such as cooking, budgeting, cleaning, laundry, ironing, and bill payments, they expressed difficulties. This finding underscored the significant shift in responsibilities faced by students as they transition from a more sheltered environment to the independent realm of university life.

The participants, especially those residing in student dormitories or student homes, highlighted those responsibilities such as market and bazaar shopping, bill payments, meal preparation, managing the timing of natural gas usage in homes, dealing with plumbing issues, and arranging for repairs were traditionally handled by their families before university life. They expressed that assuming these responsibilities has disrupted their life balance. Juggling all these tasks led to fatigue, weariness, quick depletion of energy, and difficulty in maintaining both academic and personal affairs simultaneously. Therefore, some participants expressed contemplating leaving university due to the burden of individual responsibilities. However, over time, they adapted to these challenges and abandoned these thoughts. They have stated that they eventually become accustomed to managing their responsibilities and no longer felt overwhelmed. This finding underscored the strain and challenges that students faced

while navigating the transition to independent living during their university years. For example, one participant stated that:

> I never used to pay a bill or go to a market, but now I have to go to my own market shopping. Before, my father used to do the shopping, and when I went home in the evening, I had a hot meal. However, now I have learned what time the natural gas setting should work when I live alone. I suffered a lot with the installation when there was a problem. When I had a problem, there were people in my life who would take care of it, but now I have to search and find and call a repairman. This was a big step for me to live on own hump and I think it was a good thing – UU2 -

The lack of early exposure to financial management education prior to university life often led to a natural struggle upon encountering it within the university setting. Particularly, because of the delayed onset of budgeting, some participants expressed a lack of awareness regarding budget management when they first enter university. In the initial months, there was a tendency to spend without considering the budget, leading to either seeking additional funds from family or facing financial constraints until the end of the month. However, these experiences prompted the importance to recognize the importance of the tasks previously handled by their families. Consequently, they began prioritizing matters such as household savings and economic management in their own agendas within their living arrangements. This observation underscored the significance of financial literacy and the gradual realization of its importance as students navigated the challenges of university life. For example, one participant stated that:

> It's nice to live on my own because I realized my own responsibilities. Of course, there is a longing for family here, but I don't have much trouble because my house is close by. My friend is from Urfa, for example, she came here from Urfa. She has a lot of difficulty. Even though there are one-week vacations, she cannot go home. The travel money for a week is too much. I realized that it is also nice to live apart from your family. It is a bit of a disadvantage financially. In a way, we started to limit the materials we use – UU22 -

It revealed that the participants who continued to live with their families while attending university did not taken on household responsibilities such as cooking, laundry, ironing, and cleaning, as these tasks were still carried out by family members. Additionally, in terms of budget management, these participants felt more financially at ease compared to those studying in a different city from their families. This was

because their basic needs were being met from the general family budget. This finding highlighted the continued reliance on familial support and the financial cushion provided to students who remained within their family households during their university education.

Varied influences of family dynamics. For participants coming from outside the city to attend university, the absence of family support was a notable challenge. It marked their first experience of being significantly distant from their families. Not being able to have their families nearby for urgent support led to feelings of longing. Upon initially starting university, it was observed that these participants often engaged in frequent video calls with their families, sometimes spending hours conversing with them. This finding underscored the emotional strain and adjustment process that students undergo when transitioning to university life away from their families.

The continuous and frequent calls from family members, especially from their mothers, due to negative news on the media heightened anxiety and fear among some participants. This heightened communication made them realize the controlling nature of their families. However, during their university experience, they generally found a sense of freedom and independence, leading to a reduction in emotional dependence on their families. Being away from their families resulted in fewer rules and more flexibility, with even less familial pressure felt from a distance. However, upon visiting their family home, they found that the pressure resurfaces, highlighting the contrast between the freedom experienced at university and the return to familial constraints during visits. This academic finding illuminated the dynamic relationship between familial control, independence-seeking, and the emotional impact of distance on university students. For example, one participant stated that:

> It was a very different experience, a university life away from the family. All people can do it alone, but I had a dominant family where I was born. When I went somewhere, I could either go with my friend or with my cousin. The adaptation process was a bit difficult, but everything is fine now. I live alone in this city. It was a different experience. The time I entered the house and the things I did were slightly limited, but now I came to a city in the west, I took such a responsibility. I felt that I was an individual. I liked it – UU7 -

The experiences of familial pressure among participants living at home was notably gender-focused. While male participants received minimal directives from their

families regarding entry and exit times or with whom they spend their time, female participants deeply felt the weight of familial control. These female participants expressed discomfort with their families' intervention in their departure times and the lack of recognition as independent adults by family members. This gender disparity in familial expectations highlighted the differing levels of autonomy and agency afforded to male and female participants within the family home. Such academic observations shaded light on the intersection of gender dynamics and familial influence on university students' experiences. For example, one male participant stated that:

> If I were a female, I would not be so free if I were with my family. Because my gender is male, I can go out whenever I want, I can go home whenever I want, I can spend time with my friends, I can hang out very comfortably with my friends coming from outside the province, but my sister is also studying at university here. My parents don't let my sister go in and out of the house freely and they control her – UU4 -

In addition, some participants living in family homes were more likely to encounter situations where they prioritized familial difficulties over their university lives. They felt compelled to adapt to certain circumstances in order to navigate through familial challenges. Moreover, they were more prone to facing situations such as postponing their university graduation due to familial distress. These findings underscored the significant impact of familial issues on the academic pursuits and decisions of students living in family households. For instance, one participant stated that:

> If I have a problem with the family, I get stressed. There are problems with the economy, usually the problems you have with the family are based on the economy. Since we are a large family, problems do not end for us – UU11 -

Several participants from out of town considered potential issues regarding individuation while still living in their family homes. They expressed instances where they opted to apply to universities in different cities due to their desire to study away from where their family resided. Interestingly, there were cases where participants, even when having the opportunity to attend a university with a higher quality of education in a city like Istanbul, chose not to do so in order to avoid distancing themselves from their families. One participant, for example, whose family resided in İstanbul, decided against attending a university in İstanbul, despite its superior educational offerings, with the intention of establishing their own individual life and experiencing life away from their family.

Self-discovery. Some participants conveyed their experiences of self-discovery during university life. Despite not always fully achieving the opportunity to freely express themselves, they managed to do so to some extent and have found a certain level of accomplishment and comfort in this regard. However, they expressed the challenge of being unable to be their authentic selves while with their families, contrasting with the sense of freedom to express themselves away from their families. These academic findings highlighted the ongoing journey of self-discovery and the dynamic interplay between familial expectations and personal identity formation during the university years. For example, one participant stated that:

> First of all, at university I realized that parents should not raise their children with pressure. They can be given freedom of choice. They should learn to do things on their own and not interfere too much. For example, my parents interfered with me a lot until now. Now I can make my own decisions, I discover what kind of person I am. Anyway, after a while people fly out of the nest anyway. I think people should start becoming individuals at a young age. I realized that families should not raise their children under pressure. If I have a child, I will definitely not do that – UU7 -

Some reported experiencing the discovery of their strengths and talents during their university years. They found opportunities to explore and develop skills such as folk dancing, speaking comfortably in public, rhetoric, persuasion, and active listening. Furthermore, they realized the diminishing need for approval and validation from others. These participants recognized that they did not require the approval of their families. This realization led to a decreased reliance on seeking approval from others. Additionally, they experienced a sense of self-accomplishment and increased self-confidence, contributing to their personal growth and development during their university journey. These academic findings highlighted the transformative nature of the university experience in fostering self-awareness, resilience, and self-assurance among students. For example, one participant stated that:

> At university I realized what I needed and what I didn't need. I can give an example like this, I realized that I didn't need someone else's love or approval. When I was in my family home, I needed approval from my family or I wanted my family to love me. But in the meantime, I started to say that I don't need someone to approve me because if I stand for something and I think it's right, it's right for me and I don't need someone else's love. I learned that I don't need someone else's love. I think I was able to reflect myself more transparently in university life – UU8 -

Anxiety for the future and stress. It was observed that the primary sources of stress for most participants were predominantly related to financial concerns and examinations. The latter, in particular, pertained to stress surrounding exams, especially during midterm and final weeks at university. Most participants often found themselves engulfed in stress during these periods, experiencing fear of failing exams and the possibility of not passing their courses. Exam stress encompassed worries about passing or failing a course, the obligation of attendance enforced by instructors, and the fear of failing due to absenteeism. In fact, it was observed that the root of this situation lied in the economic hardships experienced by some participants. Consequently, they expressed experiencing more stress than anticipated due to the belief that university graduation would pose financial challenges. They emphasized not only their academic concerns but also underscored their economic anxieties. This academic finding highlighted the intertwined nature of academic and financial stresses experienced by university students.

Some expressed concerns about future financial worries, including questions about whether they would be financially stable. This finding highlighted the apprehension regarding post-graduation employment and job prospects, as well as the anxiety about what would happen after graduation. Additionally, some participants voiced worries about facing societal pressure if they were unable to find employment after graduating. These concerns underscored the multifaceted nature of post-graduation anxieties, encompassing both financial stability and societal expectations regarding employment. For example, one participant stated that:

> Anxiety for future in my university life stresses me out. I think what will happen if I graduate from this university today... There is a lot of community pressure on people. If I graduate from here today, if I can't find a job, what will people say to me, what will people say behind my back. He graduated but couldn't find a job. I hear things like that he studied for 4 years and 5 years for nothing. It affects one's psychology deeply. Then, I feel very bad – UU4 -

Some participants underscored a pervasive fear of political repression, manifesting in various concerns. They expressed apprehensions about being unable to transparently articulate their political views due to fear of repercussions, such as censorship laws in the media. This inhibited individuals from freely sharing and discussing their opinions. Consequently, students experienced a sense of psychological distress, leading to

feelings of confusion and bewilderment. Moreover, these participants attributed this psychological tension to the general political and economic atmosphere of the country. This finding highlighted the significant impact of political apprehensions on individuals' psychological wellbeing amidst broader socio-political dynamics. For example, one participant stated that:

> You can't express your views freely in any way and in a very clear way nowadays since the media law came in. If you express them, you can get into trouble. Since we want to public employees, there may be problems that I will have serious problems in the future. We are protesting for a cafeteria hike and some students are collecting signatures to present to the university administration. The first question we ask: will something happen to us now? – UU3 -

Psychological wellbeing. Upon starting university, participants contemplated leaving prematurely, influenced by the reactions they received from those around them and the perceived inability to find what they had anticipated from university life. They grappled with feelings of demoralization when discussing their career aspirations with peers, often facing ridicule and experiencing a sense of disillusionment about their future prospects upon graduation.

The lack of suitable companionship exacerbated their sense of loneliness, as they struggled to forge meaningful connections in addition to not reaching to garner support while navigating their challenges alone. Moreover, the absence of social networks led to symptoms of depression, manifested through a desire for constant sleep and a propensity to spend excessive time at home or dormitory. Consequently, these participants found themselves withdrawing inwardly, harboring doubts about their ability to overcome certain obstacles. These findings underscored the multifaceted psychological challenges experienced by students, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems within the university environment.

Some participants also noted a shift in their demeanor upon entering university, remarking that they were previously more irritable and had a lower tolerance for others' differing opinions. However, upon attending university, they found themselves capable of not only listening but also accepting diverse perspectives. They indicated an increase in tolerance and open-mindedness.

Need for psychological support services. Some participants emphasized the need for psychological support due to various stressors such as feelings of loneliness, difficulty in finding suitable friends, longing for family, exam stress, and the stress stemming from the inability to express their thoughts freely. However, they attempted to cope with these challenges mainly by confiding in their closest friends or occasionally seeking guidance from academic advisors. Some participants were observed to gravitate towards confiding in a designated confidant, sharing their problems with them to find relief. This phenomenon reflected students' pursuit of a support system to alleviate stress and concerns, as they emotionally connected with their peers for this purpose. Remarkably, they participants were often unaware of the existence of psychological support units within the university. In more severe cases, three participants resorted to seeking external support, but due to the high costs, they were unable to sustain these private psychological services. They expected more psychological support units where students could receive counseling, highlighting the importance of such services for the wellbeing of students. For instance, one participant stated that:

> Psychologically, there is a psychologist at our university. I witnessed something recently, a friend of me had a psychological problem, and some suggested that the university has a psychologist that we can use free of charge. I did not know this opportunity before. But we went, like not all students of the university can benefit from there – UU4 -

It was observed that those students in the guidance and counseling program under the the Faculty of Education provides counseling services as part of their internship practices. These students aimed to assist the students on campus who were voluntary to take psychological support while also enhancing their professional development. In terms of psychological counseling, the practical courses of the guidance and counseling department contributed to supporting students' psychological wellbeing within the university. They provided contact numbers for appointments and helped with issues such as declining grades and susceptibility to negative comments. However, it was noted that this service was not widely known among all participants of this study. It was primarily recognized by departments sharing the same buildings with the Faculty of Education. For example, one participant stated that:

> I don't know if there are psychologists here. But psychological support units can be established. Psychological counseling should be a place where there is more than one counselor in the university, not one person and one counselor. For example, I mentioned the internship, psychology students provide psychological counseling within the university. Unless it is a very serious case – UU5 -

Formation of partner selection criteria. Some participants' romantic relationship experiences seemed to increase as they distanced themselves from family pressure and as the stress of central exams diminishes. They expressed those romantic relationships made them happy and supportive of each other. This happiness positively affected their academic lives. However, some students encountered problems in their romantic relationships, stating that they sometimes did not understand each other. They even mentioned that these issues sometimes negatively impacted their entire days, preventing them from achieving daily goals and affecting their academic performance. For example, one participant stated that:

> A romantic relationship has a great impact on one's university life. Not getting along in a romantic relationship is a big problem. I don't have such a person in my life right now, but I'm talking about when it happens. When it happens, breaking up with the lover you back 2 months. We broke up after a long relationship, I got out of a 2-year relationship...No one is there for you when you fall in life. This is the golden rule of life. Everyone can always stand up on their own in difficulties. I extended my university education for two semesters but no one supported me. Last year, I never came to the university but no one ever called me or asked me -UU10-

Nevertheless, they emphasized that both positive and negative romantic relationship experiences helped them understand what they wanted in a partner and what they valued in a relationship. In summary, it was evident that their criteria for formation of mate selection became more pronounced during university life. The findings suggested that preferences for formation of mate selection criteria became specialized within the framework of economic power, social status, beliefs, and social life. For instance, one participant stated that:

> My high school friends are already married. When I think about the person I could marry, I don't want to marry just anyone. I will graduate from the Faculty of Education and become a teacher. The person in front of me should know a foreign language, have good diction, listen to podcasts for example. He should be involved in something, his life should not only be about football. This is my concern. If I get married one day tomorrow, I would like to marry a person who

> can improve my life academically because an empty person means an empty life – UU19 -

4.1.3.1.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of social engagement, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) campus life, (II) inactive student clubs, and (III) differences in student relationships and communication.

4.1.3.1.4.1. Campus Life

In terms of campus life, the findings of UU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) satisfaction with physical structure of campus, (ii) limited social opportunities of campus, (iii) satisfaction with campus security and (iv) transportation to campus.

Satisfaction with physical structure of campus. Most of participants expressed general satisfaction with the campus, primarily due to its status as a relatively new university. This resulted in modern buildings that offer a fresh and appealing aesthetic. They particularly appreciated the presence of a central artificial lake, which served as a focal point and created a serene atmosphere. The surrounding seating areas provided spaces for relaxation and socializing, enhancing the overall appeal of the campus. Moreover, participants found the abundant greenery and well-maintained landscape to be refreshing, contributing to a sense of tranquility and comfort. For instance, one participant stated that:

> The campus is small but it's nice, I mean we have a beautiful lake. The greenery is green in the forest. I look at the forest like this when I'm coming on the bus – UU28 -

Limited social opportunities of campus. Most of participants expressed disappointment with the lack of social activities on campus, noting that the offerings fall far short of their expectations. They lamented the absence of student-centric events and festivities, such as theater performances, chess tournaments, pilates classes, and organized outings. They expressed a desire for a more diverse range of activities that foster intellectual exchange and social interaction. The only notable activity on campus was the opportunity to cycle around the campus provided by the university. They underlined to specifically hope for excursions to notable local destinations, such as

canyon tours in Uşak, and the celebration of Nevruz, a significant cultural event, during the spring season. For example, One participant stated that:

> The only area where we can socialize outside is the okey table, there is nothing we can do, that was a bit disappointing about my university life. If there were more activities to do, university life and student life could have been better. I don't think I lived that university student life that is described. In my dream of university life, there were festivals and then reading days. Since I didn't see these, my dreams narrowed down – UU18-

One finding revealed that among the activities that captured students' attention, the Uşak International Short Film Festival, where both national and international directors participated, hold significant appeal. However, as indicated by participants, such events were rarely encountered throughout the year. This observation underscored the need for greater opportunities and access to cultural and artistic events to enhance students' interest. Despite students expressing satisfaction with such events, their rarity or absence posed limitations in enriching their artistic and cultural experiences. For example, one participant stated that:

> If I remember correctly, about 160 films will be screened. There are short films directed by national and international students. There will be documentaries. There will be feature-length films. For example, Iranian cinema will be screened here. In these conditions, I think it is a very good thing that something like this is being screened in this period – UU1 -

The availability of social facilities relies heavily on individual efforts, and participants feel that they do not receive adequate support from the university in this regard. They expressed frustration at the insufficiency of university-backed initiatives, leading many to seek extracurricular activities such as diction or guitar courses, as well as fitness programs, from external private institutions.

It was significant that many participants expressed a desire to explore the touristic and historical sites in Uşak and its surrounding areas. However, they found it financially challenging to fulfill these desires individually and thus looked to the university to organize various excursions. There was a particular expectation among students for university-organized trips to historical landmarks, places of interest, and archaeological sites in Uşak. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of these trips for their cultural enrichment and historical education.

A noteworthy negative experience among participants was the discomfort surrounding the use of sports facilities and gyms on campus. Due to the presence of the Faculty of Sports Sciences, the practical courses within this faculty actively utilized these facilities. However, participants, excluding those affiliated with the Faculty of Sports Sciences, expressed frustration over their inability to access these sports areas due to the intensity of practical classes or the training sessions of university sports teams. Interestingly, some participants noted that these facilities remained unused despite their availability, often citing various excuses for their restricted access. Furthermore, students found it challenging to maintain their athletic backgrounds from high school or to secure spots on university sports teams. Also, it contributed to their dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities to engage in sports activities at the university level. For example, one participant stated that:

> For example, we have a basketball team at the university. When I started university, I was a handball player myself. I was playing handball and I was on the team through my teacher in high school. But I think the university does not develop different sports branches due to lack of budget. I can't play handball here. Opportunities are not offered according to the talents of the students – UU16 -

Several participants noted that many social activities not organized by the university were under the responsibility of the Youth Center affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and municipal governments. They mentioned that the Youth Center office was located within the university campus and offered support through activities such as folk dancing, diction, and sign language courses, as well as certification programs, which contribute to students' CV building efforts. Additionally, they highlighted the availability of free cinema screenings three days a week. Furthermore, the municipality organized various concerts and theaters featuring artists, and students participate in these events. However, it was noted that these concert events were not exclusively for university students but are open to the entire city population. For example, two participants stated that:

> I got certificates from the Youth Center last year. I went to the diction course and folk dances course. This year I am going to the sign language course. I am trying to get my certificates as much as possible. The more I can expand my CV, the better for me – UU16 -

> I continue to improve myself here. I continue to attend courses at the Youth Center. I went to folk dances, for example, I didn't know I had such a talent. I realized when I went to the course. I had a lot of talent – UU5 -

Two participants highlighted a motivating practice by the university regarding participation in social activities organized within the campus. They mentioned a system where participation in social events was symbolized by a certification obtained through their university web page. When attending events on campus, students scanned QR code at the entrance of each event to collect social development points. These accumulated points were evaluated when they graduated, and those who had participated in social activities above a certain level were awarded a university-approved social development certificate. They emphasized that this system motivated them, considering the university-approved social development certificate as highly significant. They framed this certification as akin to academic performance evaluation through diplomas, suggesting it served as an indicator of social development. However, it was noteworthy that apart from these two participants, no one else mentioned this practice.

These findings of study emphasized students' willingness and demand to participate in and benefit from social activities. These demands could serve as an important guide for educational institutions and local authorities, aiding in the development of policies and strategies to organize and promote such events. In this context, increasing access to artistic and cultural events could contribute to students' personal and intellectual development and foster societal engagement.

Satisfaction with campus security. Most participants expressed feeling safe within the campus. However, they also mentioned instances where they did not feel safe. Despite the presence of security at university entrances, especially participants whose hometowns were Uşak expressed concerns about individuals entering the campus whom were not students of the university. They noted that these individuals entering caused security concerns. For example, one participant stated that:

> Other people enter the campus with the student cards of some. I see people on this campus who I know don't study here. I know they don't like me. Those people threaten me. They should check well at the entrance of the campus. We do not feel safe, but other people come in who are not students of this university – UU9 -

Additionally, some participants mentioned witnessing minor disputes within the campus premises. These disputes sometimes arose from conflicting political views, while other times they stemmed from non-physical disagreements, such as romantic or friendship-related issues. They noted that these conflicts were usually resolved with the intervention of bystanders and did not escalate further.

Another issue was the traffic accidents that occurred at the entrance of the university. Some participants mentioned feeling unsafe due to the absence of a pedestrian overpass in previous years, citing an incident where a university student lost their life as a result. This lack of infrastructure for pedestrian safety led to concerns among the students regarding their safety on campus. Another security concern was the dog attacks on campus. Despite the presence of a student club that assisted animals on campus, some participants gave witnessed instances where dogs frequently attacked each other. These vocal attacks made them fearful, to the extent that they were afraid to walk on campus at night. Several participants mentioned that some students injured in dog attacks on campus. For example, one participant stated that:

> Nobody can do anything at night because there are dogs. Last time, a dog attacked a girl for example. I am very disturbed about dogs. I wish precautions were taken. I am an animal-friendly person, but I am still afraid of dogs, they bark at each other. They should have a kennel and be tied up, but they should still be taken care of. Especially on that side of the library, they come in front of the dormitory – UU27 -

Transportation challenges to campus. The female participants staying in government dormitories, due to their proximity to campus, did not encounter significant transportation issues. However, the male participants in KYK dormitories and those living off-campus regardless of gender mentioned getting on minibuses or buses from the city center. Nevertheless, the lengthy intervals between bus schedules posed challenges for transportation. These participants reported that the long intervals between bus services contributed to overcrowding, sometimes causing them to be unable to board despite leaving home early, resulting in tardiness for classes. For example, one participant stated that:

> Campus transportation can sometimes be a problem. The minibuses can be very intermittent. When there is no places in the minibus, I can sometimes be late because you have to wait at least 15 minutes. Bus services need to be increased. I think the municipality should have done something – UU34 -

4.1.3.1.4.2. Inactive Student Clubs

The observation that despite the presence of numerous student clubs, only a select few exhibited significant activities could be attributed to several underlying factors, as highlighted by the perspectives of participants. One prominent factor was the perception that many student clubs were established with a primary aim of gathering together rather than a clear and focused objective. Some participants noted that without a defined purpose or direction, these student clubs struggled to sustain engagement beyond initial interactions. Moreover, the lack of a coherent focus within these groups led to a dilution of efforts and resources. It hindered their ability to attract and retain members. Additionally, they expressed concerns regarding the limited scope of student clubs, which often failed to offer alternative avenues for involvement outside their narrow domain. This limitation not only restricted the diversity of experiences available to students but also alienated those whose interests did not align with the dominant themes of existing communities. Thus, the testimonies of participants underscored the need for a reevaluation of the structure and function of student clubs. They should serve as inclusive and purpose-driven platforms for student engagement. For example, one participant stated that:

> Student clubs should not be left only in the hands of students. For each student club, if the students are not very knowledgeable and you join the club, but there is not much activity. You cannot improve yourself. The purpose of joining the student club is to develop you, to establish sociability and to work at the same time. I think these are a bit more inadequate. It shouldn't be just clubs organizing parties or getting together and talking about the weather – UU1 -

The absence of dedicated spaces such as rooms and offices for student clubs posed a significant challenge to their cohesion and effectiveness. Without physical locations to gather and conduct activities, student clubs found it increasingly difficult to foster a sense of belonging and collaboration among members. Moreover, the lack of centralized spaces hampered communication and coordination within and between different student clubs. It hindered the exchange of ideas and collaborative initiatives.

Furthermore, some participants expressed frustration with the inadequacy of communication channels, citing difficulties in staying informed about campus activities and initiatives. The inefficiency of existing notification systems exacerbated this issue. This is because announcements and updates often failed to reach the

intended audience in a timely manner or are overlooked amidst the barrage of information. Addressing these challenges required a multifaceted approach that included the provision of dedicated spaces for student clubs, the implementation of robust communication channels, and the enhancement of notification systems to ensure timely and relevant dissemination of information.

Most of the participants realized that student clubs offered valuable opportunities for interdisciplinary networking and collaboration. However, some participants had barriers in engage with them due to concerns about time management and biases. Student clubs served as platforms where individuals from diverse academic backgrounds converge, facilitating the exchange of ideas and perspectives across disciplinary boundaries. However, despite the potential benefits of participation, certain students hesitated to commit time to extracurricular involvement. They feared that it might detract from their academic responsibilities and impede their progress in coursework. Moreover, there existed a pervasive bias among some students towards student clubs, perceiving them as secondary to academic pursuits and unworthy of investment. This skepticism often led students to defer joining student clubs, citing various excuses and rationalizations to justify their procrastination. Nevertheless, as graduation approaches, many participants came to regret their decision to eschew involvement in student clubs. They started to recognize the missed opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and networking.

4.1.3.1.4.3. Differences in Student Relationships and Communication

The opportunity to share the same environment with individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds offered a unique social chance for students. They encountered people with varied psychological makeup, including those who have grown up without love and individuals with personality disorders. Interacting with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds allowed them to broaden their understanding of the world from political and religious viewpoints.

At the beginning of university life, students often faced trust issues. Some participants underlined that the people portraying themselves differently than the reality. This led to trust issues noticing the inconsistencies. Particularly, these participants mentioned that they initially struggled to discern genuine individuals from those projecting false

personas at the beginning of university. They highlighted the shift from sincere interactions in high school to the potentially ulterior motives or manipulative nature of conversations in university settings. For example, two participants stated that:

> I was going to live in another city on my own for the first time. When I first arrived, I had a hard time being together with different people. At first it is very difficult because you don't know them. You don't know what kind of characteristics they have, whether they are thieves or have bad habits, but you have to share the same environment and there is a process of getting used to it – UU2 -

> I find my social life in your life to be up and down. As I get to know people, I have made the right friendship choice or I have not made the right friendship choice at the same time. As I got to know people, I learned the real face of many of them and cut off communication. I try to communicate openly with people because it would be healthier for me – UU8 -

They found it challenging to form close relationships with other students. This initial struggle to bond led to difficulties in establishing friendships, as students had trouble finding like-minded peers. Additionally, the clustering of departments and the shared facilities among certain faculties, such as the common cafeteria usage between the Faculties of Education and Communication or the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering using similar cafeterias, contributed to the perception of compartmentalization. This phenomenon was primarily attributed to the formation of departmental-based cliques and groupings within classes, leading to communication barriers among students. For example, one participant stated that:

> Especially when I first came, I couldn't talk to anyone and I didn't have friends. At first, I thought I wouldn't have any friends. I was thinking about whether I would find a like-minded friend, whether I would find friends, whether I would like them. I was a bit stressed about it. But I started to realize that someone is there for you without realizing it – UU29 -

The participant from the Faculty of Dentistry noted a sense of segregation from students in other faculties due to the location of their faculty building outside the campus. This participant mentioned that they only attended classes on campus when necessary, promptly leaving afterward. Particularly, the participants from the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry appeared to isolate themselves from students in other faculties. Their discourse suggested that their high scores on university entrance exams, which they viewed as indicators of academic success, influenced this behavior.

They perceived students from other faculties as inadequate for their own social development, leading to their self-isolation.

4.1.3.1.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

Under the category of financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) financial challenges and budget management, (II) challenging accommodation conditions and (III) differences in nutrition opportunities.

Financial challenges and budget management. Many participants expressed enduring a challenging university life due to the deteriorating economic conditions in the country, accompanied by a decrease in purchasing power. Particularly disheartening for them was the disparity between their own university experiences and the stories recounted by relatives and acquaintances who had attended university before them. These participants expressed dissatisfaction that their own university life did not reflect the university life experienced by these acquaintances who had previously attended university. They said that in previous years there were fewer economic concerns and they were able to follow concerts, theaters and university trips of their acquaintances who seemed to have faced fewer financial difficulties. Some participants lamented their inability to even afford a coffee at a cafe, illustrating the extent to which they had to tightly control their budget. Specifically, they highlighted how economic constraints hindered the enrichment of their university experiences.

Most participants expressed that while they benefited from the loans and scholarships provided by the Student Loans and Dormitories Institution (KYK), these aids were insufficient to sustain themselves. They mentioned receiving economic support from their families, and as years progress, they felt they became a greater burden on their families due to worsening economic conditions. This was because a significant portion of their financial aid, often nearly half, was allocated towards accommodation expenses. Moreover, it was known that while scholarships from KYK were non-repayable, the loans were repayable. Some participants expressed surprise when they saw some students receiving scholarships despite their families not meeting the expected economic criteria. They argued that economically disadvantaged students often did not receive scholarships, highlighting a lack of transparency in the process.

Some participants hesitated to seek additional financial support from their families due to discomfort stemming from their siblings' education or other family financial strains. Consequently, some clandestinely engaged in various jobs such as waitressing, cashiering, cleaning, or courier services, without their families' knowledge. It was revealed that some individuals also tried to find temporary employment opportunities during economically challenging times. However, it was noteworthy that female participants particularly felt psychological implications as they all work covertly. This concealment from their families was predominantly observed among female participants. Some thought that their family would be very upset if they found out that they had to work due to economic difficulties, while others anticipated disapproval due to already restrictive family dynamics. As a result, they indicated that the necessity to work to make ends meet sometimes led to instances of arriving late to classes or even missing classes altogether. For instance, two participants stated that:

> I am working as a waitress in a doner shop this semester. I was already working part time, I go after classes, one or two hours, sometimes three or four hours a day. It changes from day to day. I have to work because I don't want to burden my family. It is a source of income for me and I don't burden my family too much – UU5 -

Some participants particularly highlighted the exorbitant cost of both intra-city and inter-city transportation. Those reliant on minibuses to reach campus complained about the high fares. They expressed how it adversely affects their budgets. Even participants who wished to remain close to their families and envisioned visiting them easily on weekends found themselves reducing their frequency of visits due to the expenses of transportation. In fact, one participant mentioned opting to walk long distances to accommodation rather than pay for transportation. This showed the impact of transportation costs on daily life and behaviors.

> Campus transportation is easy but difficult without a budget. Due to today's economic conditions, we have to look at everything financially. Because the economy is troubled, for example bus fares. No one is saying that we should not make money from the student. It is looked at with the view that we can earn more money – UU3 -

Challenging accommodation conditions. Many participants had issues regarding the conditions set by KYK dormitories. Firstly, these participants were dissatisfied with the strict control of entry and exit times at the dormitories. They expressed discontent

with the prohibition of entry into the dormitory after 11 p.m., stating that they were not allowed in if they were late. However, these students argued that they were adults and deemed these rules unnecessary. They highlighted that these time restrictions not only limited their socialization with their friends but also imposed challenges on academic assignments and group projects, which often required collaborative work beyond the designated hours.

Some participants expressed considerable discomfort with the prohibition of certain appliances such as electric kettles and coffee makers in the dormitories, as well as the high demand for laundry machines and the superficial cleanliness of dorm rooms. The restrictions on using these electronic devices were particularly irksome. Additionally, the long queues for laundry services added to their frustration. Moreover, the superficial cleaning of dorm rooms failed to meet their standards of cleanliness. This exacerbated their dissatisfaction with the living conditions provided by the KYK dormitories. For example, one participant stated that:

> We were not allowed to use electric coffee pots and coffee machines in the dormitories. They were constantly coming to check the rooms. There was constant friction between you and the dormitory administration. They come and take it back. We take it back and so on, and when you grow up, you can't tolerate such things. In the last year, when there was a problem due to the laundry conversations, and the entrance and exit times of the dormitory were also a problem, we went home so that I could be more comfortable in student life – UU10 -

Several participants opted to move into student housing with friends. They cited the inflexible entry and exit times at the KYK dormitories as a primary reason for this decision. However, these students expressed financial struggles associated with rent payments. Despite the high rental prices, they highlighted the poor physical conditions of the houses, which frequently required repairs and maintenance. Issues such as water leaks and clogged toilets were common occurrences, further exacerbating their living challenges.

In addition, there were significant problems with internet connectivity in the KYK dormitory, forcing many students to rely on mobile data networks. This situation severely hampered their ability to use the internet effectively. Students often faced slow speeds, frequent disconnections, and limited data allowances, which hindered

their academic activities, access to online resources, and communication. The unreliable internet connection in the dormitory became one of major inconveniences. This affected their study routines and overall online experience. For example, one participant stated that:

> One issue is that I think we are really far behind as a country. There is an infrastructure problem in the country as internet. Especially because there is such a problem in KYK. For example, I cannot work on the idea of a virtual university, I cannot do it. The connection is constantly disconnected while video chatting with my family. I bought my own private internet. I bought a super box. We try to use my own internet with my roommates – UU34 -

Moreover, female participants residing in KYK dormitories found themselves fortunate due to the convenient location of their accommodations right next to the campus. This allowed them easy access to transportation and campus amenities. However, male participants residing in KYK dormitories faced challenges due to the distance between their accommodations and the campus. Despite expressing concerns about these transportation difficulties, the primary issue for male students revolved around the absence of essential facilities such as markets and socializing areas near their dormitories. The lack of these amenities, coupled with rigid entry and exit rules to dormitories, highlighted the inability of students to procure necessities when needed. This finding underscored the need for focus on the disparities in access to amenities between male and female KYK dormitories and the potential impact on students' daily lives and wellbeing. For example, one participant stated that:

> Since Uşak is a small city, it is not very sufficient to meet the needs. When we want to go to the market, it is very far away. There are markets and grocery stores, we have to walk 10-15 minutes. That is also a bit of a problem, especially in cold weather. If we order, it comes very late, it takes at least half an hour and 45 minutes. In terms of food, the food in the dormitory is not good at all. When we order food from outside, the food is cold until we come to the dormitory – UU34 -

While some participants previously experienced living away from their families in dormitories during their high school years, many were encountering communal living for the first time. It was evident that for many, relationships with both dormitory and housemates were generally positive. They demonstrated mutual respect and consideration for each other's sensitivities. However, one participant expressed discomfort with one of their roommates, noting a failure to adhere to agreed-upon

rules. As a result, they, along with other roommates, attempted to drive their roommate out of the room. This incident served as an example of bullying. While overall, issues in communal living were not prevalent among students, instances of bullying like this should not be overlooked. For instance, one participant stated that:

> I had a roommate, for example, we didn't get along with him. We were making noise at night. When he disturbed us, we did the same to him. We excluded him. I don't say this very proudly, but we made him leave the room. He actually started to stay in that room before us, she owned the room. He was slamming the doors, slamming the cabinets. He started to bother us at first. Then three of us unanimously voted to send him away because we were uncomfortable with him – UU8 -

Differences in nutrition opportunities. Some participants expressed satisfaction with the meals served in the university cafeteria, while others conveyed dissatisfaction. Satisfied participants noted that the meals were reasonably priced compared to eating the same dish elsewhere for a higher cost. However, dissatisfied students mentioned that although they didn't find the prices high, they were disappointed. Despite different meal names listed on the monthly menu, the same dishes were consistently prepared. They noted that only the forms of preparation, such as diced, stewed, or dry, varied, while the ingredients remained unchanged.

Some participants highlighted that while the cafeteria prices remained reasonable, they expressed discontent over the annual increments and continuous escalation of prices. They noted that despite acknowledging the affordability of the cafeteria prices compared to eating out, they felt aggrieved by the frequent price hikes. Furthermore, in conversations with peers from other universities, they learned that cafeteria fees at those institutions were comparatively lower. Despite emphasizing the affordability of cafeteria prices relative to external dining options, participants still perceived the cafeteria fees as expensive when compared to those of other universities.

Some participants noted that due to economic constraints, students already found the prices of on-campus private cafeterias expensive, using them primarily for purchasing tea and coffee. They expressed the expectation for a diversification of dining options within the campus premises.

Most participants residing in KYK dormitories generally expressed dissatisfaction with the meals provided. Common complaints included the repetitive nature of the

meals, hygiene issues, small portions, and the serving of cold food. It was observed that meal services at KYK were outsourced to private companies through tenders. The participants commonly complained about meals being served cold. Additionally, they often noted the repetitive use of the same ingredients in variously named dishes, indicating limitations in meal variety. Furthermore, some participants emphasized hygiene issues, such as finding hair, plastic wrap, or flies in their food, which discouraged them from adhering to their meal routines. These participants felt that their nutritional needs were not adequately met, sometimes resorting to eating outside or going hungry due to the meals being inedible or unavailable. Moreover, some participants complained that the issues with the meals provided in KYK dormitories stemmed from the contracts awarded to catering companies through tenders. They expressed frustration at the lack of oversight and control over these companies. It led them to feel obligated to consume subpar meals.

4.1.3.1.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of political engagement, four sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) need to be taken more responsibility for social opportunities, (II) need for alumni network, (III) message and request forms to the rector, and (IV) organization of university web-pages.

University management's responsibility for social opportunities. There was a gap between university administration promising enhanced social opportunities for students and their actual practices. Despite talk of a student-friendly environment, actions often fell short, leading to student disillusionment. This lack of follow-through extended to events meant to boost student morale. Notably, requests to lower dining hall prices were ignored, impacting students' daily lives and finances. These issues breed dissatisfaction and disconnect among participants, hampering their university experience and motivation. It was clear that effective solutions demanded genuine dialogue between university officials and students, prioritizing student input and wellbeing in organizing events and services. Bridging this gap was crucial to creating a truly enriching social environment for students. For example, one participant stated that:

> It should be able to provide social opportunities for these students. But the university should want to do this, more events can be organized. The university administration says they are student-friendly, but you cannot see the university officials at the university. So, the university administration needs to be a little more student-friendly. Events can be organized for socializing; cinema events can be organized. These can be done intermittently. Festivals can be organized. These will both increase the motivation of the students and regulate the attitude of the students towards the university. No one is satisfied with the university here – UU2 -

Need for alumni network. Some participants conveyed a limited awareness of the activities of graduates due to the status of newly establishment of UU. They emphasized the importance of knowing what the university's students did after graduation, where they worked, and the relevance of their advice. They noted partial efforts by the Faculty of Communication in this regard, but were observed a lack of similar structures university-wide. Moreover, they believed that rather than overlooking their graduates, the university should support their development in line with evolving global expectations. Thus, there was a perceived necessity for the university administration to establish an alumni network system. They wanted that their university should continue support for alumni in adapting to changing professional landscapes.

Communication with the rector. Some participants have expressed their satisfaction with the availability of message and complaint forms to the rector through the university website. However, they noted a lack of assurance regarding the acknowledgment, reading, and actioning of these messages and requests. For instance, following discontent over cafeteria fees increases, they have both protested and formally complained to the rector via these forms. Yet, they have not seen meaningful resolutions beyond superficial responses. These students expect these messages and requests to be addressed concretely. For example, two participants stated that:

> The university does not pay much attention to student demands. I cannot speak in general, but in terms of cafeteria fees, our demands were not taken into consideration because of our protest last year. After the protest, they published a text while entering the student information system. The petitions you gave to the attention of all students were read and evaluated, but the decision of the catering company that we understood cannot be changed, they wrote a text such as – UU4 -

> The university has complaint lines and suggestion lines. Apart from them, there is an application called message to the rector. You create an e-mail to the rector. The e-mail of the rector is already everywhere, but this is the name of the application. Let me give the smallest example, let's say you are going to play an astroturf match, you will use the stadium. Let's say the style of the person in front of you, the official, is very wrong. While he should respect you, he spoke in a high pitch, or instead of solving your case, he did not care about you, he did not fulfill your needs. Then you say, you make a complaint, such and such an incident happened. But I don't know if my friend got any response from this – UU27 -

Organization of university web-pages. Several participants expressed a general lack of awareness regarding the academic, psychological, and social activities of the university, citing ineffective communication channels. They highlighted the need for enhancements in guidance and announcements on the university's website. They suggested a revamp to make it more user-friendly. It was noted that upon entering the university's web pages, there was a prevalence of administrative-focused content rather than student-centric information. This caused student pages relatively ineffective. Therefore, improving the organization and accessibility of information on the university's website could potentially address these concerns and better engage students. For instance, one participant stated that:

> The university administration needs to make university life easier for students. I think it would be better if the web page was a little more active, a little more up-to-date. There is a frequently asked questions section. When you enter there, even the question of a system that the university used to use is still there. Some things are not updated enough in that regard. Students cannot find what they want and what they are looking for on the web pages – UU21 –

4.1.3.2. Interpretative Findings of UU

In this section, for UU participants, the researcher's interpretations regarding the six fundamental categories of student engagement are included. Through a more interpretative approach, this analysis tries to delve into each category. It contributes to a comprehensive understanding of student engagement in UU.

4.1.3.2.1. Environment of University

The findings of UU in terms of environment of university highlight several key factors impacting student engagement at the university. They emphasize the crucial role of pre-admission expectations and the broader context of the university and its city.

Students form a variety of expectations based on information from diverse sources, which shape their initial perceptions and excitement about university life. These expectations significantly influence their overall engagement. Additionally, the context of both the university and the city further affects student engagement.

Pressure to graduate from university. *The pressure to graduate from higher education is a critical factor driving student engagement*. Many participants view university graduation as essential for career and social success, influenced by societal expectations. This pressure motivates students to persevere in their academic pursuits, despite challenges. *For first-generation students, university represents an opportunity to break socio-economic barriers and secure a better future, thereby enhancing their engagement through a sense of purpose and aspiration*.

Limited social environment of the city. *The limited social environment in the city affects student engagement by restricting social activities and opportunities for personal development*. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of public amenities and social infrastructure. The limited social opportunities in the city make it challenging for students to engage fully in university life. It emphasizes the need for local authorities to improve social services and recreational facilities.

Safety concerns in the city. *Safety concerns within the city significantly influence student engagement.* Many students feel insecure, especially during late hours, which hinders their participation in evening classes and social activities. *The fear of crime and negative interactions in the city environment contribute to a sense of isolation and decreased engagement*. Addressing these safety issues is crucial for fostering a supportive and engaging university environment.

Overall, enhancing the social and physical environment of both the university and the city, addressing safety concerns, and meeting the diverse needs and expectations of students can significantly improve student engagement.

4.1.3.2.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

The findings on academic engagement at the university reveal several key aspects that significantly influence student engagement. These include academic staff, teaching quality, infrastructure and resources, and academic culture.

Academic staff. Regarding academic staff, communication issues between faculty and students were a notable concern. Students reported that the lack of clear and timely communication about class schedules and cancellations disrupted their academic preparation and performance. *Furthermore, instances of disrespectful and dismissive behavior from some faculty members negatively impacted students' psychological wellbeing and academic engagement*. *Effective communication and respectful interactions are critical for fostering student engagement and building trust between students and faculty.*

Quality of teaching. *The quality of teaching also plays a crucial role in academic engagement.* The prevalence of theory-heavy and rote memorization-focused courses left students feeling unprepared for practical applications in their fields. Students expressed a need for more interactive and application-based learning experiences that bridge the gap between theory and practice. *Additionally, the emphasis on exam-oriented teaching, particularly for public sector job exams, limited academic engagement.* A balanced approach that incorporates both theoretical knowledge and practical skills is essential for meaningful academic engagement and long-term career success.

Infrastructure and resources. *Infrastructure and resources are fundamental to supporting academic engagement.* While students appreciated the availability of study spaces and digital resources, the physical inadequacies of classrooms and laboratory facilities were significant drawbacks. *The lack of dedicated buildings for certain faculties and the insufficiency of lab equipment hindered students' ability to fully engage with their academic programs.* Addressing these infrastructure limitations is vital for creating an environment conducive to active and effective learning.

Academic culture. *The academic culture at the university is characterized by insufficient internationalization efforts and inadequate support for postgraduate education, was seen as a barrier to student engagement*. The lack of opportunities for language learning and international exchanges limited students' global perspectives and competitiveness. Furthermore*, the perceived difficulty in competing with well-established universities and the absence of clear career planning and development pathways diminished students' engagement*. Fostering a vibrant academic culture that

emphasizes internationalization, supports postgraduate ambitions, and provides robust career development services is crucial for enhancing academic engagement.

In summary, to improve academic engagement, universities must focus on enhancing communication between faculty and students and integrating practical and interactive teaching methods. In addition, they need to upgrade infrastructure and resources, and cultivate an internationalized academic culture.

4.1.3.2.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

The findings highlight several key areas impacting university students' psychological engagement. These include individual autonomy and responsibility differences, effects of family dynamics, self-discovery, and future anxiety and stress.

Individual autonomy and responsibility differences. The transition to university life marks a significant shift in individual autonomy and responsibility. Students often move from a highly structured environment, where parents manage many daily tasks. In university life, they must independently handle cooking, budgeting, cleaning, and other chores. This transition can initially overwhelm students, highlighting the critical role of developing self-efficacy and resilience. *Psychological engagement is deeply tied to this newfound independence, as students gradually adapt and gain confidence in managing their responsibilities*. This process fosters a sense of accomplishment, which are essential for their psychological engagement.

Effects of family dynamics. *Family dynamics significantly impact students' psychological engagement.* Students moving away from home for university face emotional and practical challenges due to the lack of immediate family support. This distance often leads to feelings of loneliness and homesickness, mitigated by frequent communication with family members. The balance between independence and emotional connection is crucial here. Furthermore, gender-specific expectations and family control continue to affect autonomy. *Male students often experience more freedom, while female students face stricter family control. It highlights the role of gender in shaping psychological engagement and the ability to adapt to new environments.*

Self-discovery. University life serves as a pivotal period for self-discovery. Students explore and develop their identities, often finding freedom to express themselves away from familial expectations. *This journey of self-discovery enhances their psychological engagement, as they learn to navigate personal strengths and weaknesses.* The development of skills such as public speaking, persuasion, and active listening boosts their self-confidence and sense of achievement. These experiences are crucial for building psychological wellbeing and psychological engagement.

Future anxiety and stress. *Financial concerns and academic pressures are major stressors for university students, affecting their psychological engagement*. The uncertainty about future job prospects and societal expectations adds to their anxiety and stress. These impacts their overall engagement with university life. *The need for accessible mental health services becomes evident as students struggle to manage academic and financial stressors*. Enhancing psychological support systems can significantly improve students' engagement and wellbeing. It highlights the importance of mental health resources in academic settings.

Overall, these findings emphasize the complex interplay between autonomy, family dynamics, self-discovery, and future anxieties in shaping students' psychological engagement during their university journey.

4.1.3.2.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

The findings highlight several key areas impacting university students' social engagement. These include campus life, inactive student clubs and student relationships and communication differences.

Campus life. *The physical attractiveness of the campus, with its modern buildings and well-maintained landscapes, plays a significant role in enhancing social engagement*. The central artificial lake and green spaces provide natural gathering spots that encourage spontaneous interactions and community building. *However, the limited social amenities and organized activities on campus severely restrict opportunities for meaningful engagement.* Students express a strong desire for more diverse and frequent events such as theater performances, tournaments, and cultural trips. Addressing this gap by increasing the variety and frequency of social events can significantly boost social engagement.

Inactive student clubs. *The inactivity of many student clubs highlights structural issues that impede social engagement*. Many clubs lack clear objectives and fail to maintain consistent member participation. This lack of direction diminishes the clubs' potential as platforms for social interaction and community building. Furthermore, the absence of dedicated spaces for these clubs exacerbates the problem. *Improving the organizational structure of student clubs, providing clear goals, and ensuring dedicated spaces can transform these clubs into vital hubs of social engagement*.

Variations in student relationships and communication. *Students' initial difficulties in forming trustworthy relationships due to the diverse backgrounds and unfamiliarity with peers present a barrier to social engagement*. The challenge of identifying genuine connections in a new environment underscores the need for trust and open communication. Additionally, departmental clustering and the isolation of certain faculties, such as Dentistry and Medicine, further fragment the student community. These divisions limit cross-departmental interactions. It reduces the scope of students' social networks. Encouraging interdepartmental activities and promoting inclusive environment enhance social engagement.

In summary, to enhance social engagement at the university, it is essential to address the limitations in campus activities, restructure student clubs for better functionality and present an environment with cross-departmental interactions.

4.1.3.2.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

The investigation into financial challenges, accommodation difficulties, and food accessibility highlights significant impacts on student engagement.

Financial struggles. Financial difficulties severely limit students' ability to participate in university activities. The economic downturn has reduced their purchasing power. It restricts access to enriching experiences like concerts, theater performances, and trips. *This financial strain diminishes opportunities for social and cultural engagement, which are essential for a well-rounded education*. Enhancing financial aid and ensuring fair distribution of scholarships can help alleviate these burdens. It would allow students to engage more fully in university life.

Accommodation difficulties. Strict dormitory regulations and poor living conditions hinder students' freedom and social interactions. The restrictions on personal appliances not only limit social activities but also impede academic collaborations. Additionally, inadequate maintenance in dormitories and private rentals adds stress, detracting from the overall university experience. Improving living conditions and offering more flexible dormitory policies can enhance student engagement.

Nutrition accessibility. *The quality and accessibility of food in university and dormitory facilities impact student engagement*. While some students find cafeteria prices reasonable, others are dissatisfied with repetitive and low-quality meals. In KYK dormitories, issues like poor hygiene and insufficient portions further exacerbate this problem. Enhancing food quality and variety can improve students' physical and mental wellbeing for student engagement.

In summary, addressing financial struggles, improving accommodation conditions, and ensuring better food options are key to enhancing student engagement. These measures will enable students to fully participate in both academic and extracurricular activities, fostering a more engaged student community.

4.1.3.2.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

The exploration of political engagement at the university reveals significant insights into students' experiences. The findings include the need for more responsibility in providing social opportunities, the necessity of an alumni network, feedback mechanisms for the rector, and the organization of university websites.

Responsibility for social opportunities. There is a notable gap between the university administration's promises of enhanced social opportunities and their actual implementation. *Despite claims of creating a student-friendly environment, the lack of follow-through on these promises results in student disengagement*. *Effective political engagement requires genuine dialogue between university officials and students*. Bridging this gap is essential to fostering a truly enriching social environment that motivates and engages students politically.

Need for an alumni network. A robust alumni network is crucial for professional development and fostering a sense of community. Establishing this network would

strengthen students' connection to the university and enhance their political engagement.

Feedback mechanisms for the rector. While students appreciate the availability of message and complaint forms directed to the rector via the university's website, there is a lack of confidence in the efficacy of these channels. *For political engagement to be meaningful, it is crucial that student feedback is not only acknowledged but also acted upon with tangible solutions*. Ensuring that students' voices are heard and their concerns addressed can foster a more politically engaged.

Organization of university websites. The ineffective communication channels and the lack of awareness about academic, psychological, and social activities highlight the need for improved university websites. Students find the current websites to be management-focused rather than student-centered. *Enhancing the organization and accessibility of information on university websites can significantly improve student engagement. A user-friendly and regularly updated website can serve as a vital tool for students to stay engaged, thereby enhancing their political engagement within the university.*

In summary, addressing the gap between promised and actual social opportunities, establishing a strong alumni network, ensuring effective feedback mechanisms, and improving university websites are key to enhancing political engagement among students.

4.1.4. Case 4: Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU)

Within-case of ADYU, the findings of ADYU are presented in two distinct ways. In the first part, the collected data are transformed into descriptive findings. In the second part, the researcher provides an interpretation of the data and observations, offering an analytical perspective on the findings.

4.1.4.1. Descriptive Findings of AYBU

Under these six categories, the results of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU) are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. *The findings of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (AYBU)*

Category	**Sub-themes**
Environment of university	Expectation of professional and academic development Expectation of diversity of university student profile Need for more university autonomy and freedom Targeted university for studying Rich social environment of city English-medium university Newly establishment status of the university Ideologically coded identity of the university Separated campuses Continuous increase in student quotas
University in terms of academic engagement	Academic staff - *Extensive network with public and private sector* - *Insufficient English-speaking skills* - *Academic workload* - *Differentiated communication skills* Teaching - *Intensive course load* - *Limitations in English language proficiency* - *Shaping the course contents generally with a focus of theoretical knowledge* - *Ineffectiveness of online teaching* - *Harder exams in online period* - *Different evaluation mechanisms and feedback* - *Internship experiences regarding professional life.* Infrastructure and resources - *Absence of well-equipped library* - *Inequality of opportunity in access to labs across campuses* - *Problems in the internet connection* Academic culture - *Prominent internationalization efforts* - *Widespread use of abbreviation of the university name within the university*

	- *Need for orientation activities*
University in terms of psychological engagement	Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities Varied influences of family dynamics Personal development Dealing with stress Anxiety for the future Psychological wellbeing
University in terms of social engagement	Campus life - *Inadequacy of physical structure of campus* - *Limited social opportunities of campus* - *Satisfaction with campus security* - *Transportation challenges to campus* Inactive student clubs Differences in student relationships and communication
Financial issues, accommodation and nutrition	Financial challenges and budget management Challenging accommodation conditions Differences in nutrition opportunities
University in terms of political engagement	Communication gaps between university students and university administration Organization of university web-pages

4.1.4.1.1. Environment of University

Student engagement is significantly influenced by expectations of university students prior to enrollment and the broader context and structure of the university and city. Before stepping onto campus, students form a set of anticipations based on information gathered from various sources. It shapes their initial perception and enthusiasm to university life. These expectations play a crucial role in their overall engagement. Additionally, the contexts of university and city further impact student engagement. Under the theme of environment of university, seven sub-themes are obtained. These 10 sub-themes are called (I) expectation of professional and academic development, (II) expectation of diversity of university student profile, (III) need for more university autonomy and freedom, (IV) targeted university for studying, (V) rich social

environment of city, (VI) English-medium university, (VII) newly establishment status of the university, (VIII) ideologically coded identity of the university, (IX) separated campuses, and (X) continuous increase in student quotas.

Professional and academic development. Most of the participants expected that their university education would equip them with technical skills that would advance their future professional careers. Specifically, they hoped to develop expertise in various subfields of their disciplines, which would enable them to secure employment in both the public and private sectors. This finding highlighted the expectations students would have regarding the role of higher education in their professional development.

Before entering university, more and more participants envisioned it as a crucial phase for acquiring specialized technical skills that were directly applicable to their future careers. They expected that the education and certification trainings provided by their universities would prepare them comprehensively for the demands of the job market. This included not only foundational knowledge in their chosen fields but also advanced competencies in specific sub-disciplines.

Some participants expressed a clear expectation that their university experience would involve rigorous academic training and practical skill development. They anticipated opportunities to engage in hands-on learning, internships, and projects that would allow them to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations. This practical experience was seen as vital for making them competitive candidates in the job market. Moreover, participants hoped that by developing expertise in various branches of their academic fields, they would enhance their employability across different sectors. They believed that a well-rounded education with a focus on technical proficiency would facilitate easier entry into both public and private sector employment. This expectation showed the importance students place on the applicability and relevance of their university education to their future career prospects.

Diversity of university student profile. Some participants generally anticipated encountering a socially enriching environment. Specifically, they noted that during their high school years, they were surrounded by peers from similar backgrounds and circumstances. However, with the transition to university life, there was a heightened expectation to interact more frequently with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

High school was characterized by homogeneous interactions and conversations, whereas the university environment promised exposure to varied religious and political viewpoints. This exposure was anticipated to foster a consciousness about differences and support a process of questioning and critical thinking. This finding underscored the expectation of diversity in the university experience as a catalyst for intellectual and social growth.

In high school, participants reported experiencing a lack of diversity, with most peers sharing similar socio-economic backgrounds and viewpoints. This homogeneity often led to repetitive and unchallenging social interactions. In contrast, university life was perceived as a stage where diversity was not only present but also vocal and influential. The anticipated mix of differing perspectives was seen as an opportunity for personal development. Some participants expected that this diversity would bring about greater awareness and understanding of different cultural, religious, and political beliefs.

University autonomy and freedom. Some participants anticipated that universities would offer greater autonomy and freedom before they entered higher education. However, many reported that universities in Türkiye did not live up to these expectations, as they were influenced by dominant ideological views. This finding also highlighted that students in Türkiye wished to encounter an environment where they could freely express themselves.

Before attending university, some participants envisioned a setting characterized by independence and academic freedom, free from the constraints of prevailing ideological influences. They hoped that the university would be a place where diverse opinions could be freely expressed and debated. However, the reality they encountered often felt short of these expectations. Some of them were disappointed to find that Turkish universities were significantly affected by dominant ideological perspectives, which they believed hinder the freedom and autonomy that they had hoped for.

This perceived lack of freedom and autonomy in Turkish universities underscored broader systemic issues within the educational framework. They noted that the academic environment frequently suppressed open discussion and the exchange of diverse viewpoints. They saw university autonomy and freedom essential for intellectual growth and personal development. The influence of dominant ideologies

created an atmosphere where students might feel reluctant or fearful to express their true thoughts and beliefs.

Targeted university for studying. Some participants indicated that their preferred university was not actually AYBU. Instead, they expressed a desire to study at historically prestigious institutions such as Middle East Technical University, Hacettepe University, or Gazi University, where they had clearer information about the accomplishments of alumni. However, due to not achieving the necessary scores in the central university entrance exam to gain admission to these universities, they chose AYBU as an alternative, primarily because they wanted to study in Ankara. For example, one participant stated that:

> As I said, it is a newly established university. Our university will also become well-established over time. In Türkiye, students who are just preparing for university or who have been studying at university for 4-5 years know about AYBU, but I think AYBU has a lot to do. First of all, the perception needs to be changed. If I had a choice, I would prefer Middle East Technical University or Hacettepe University. Hacettepe University is a more suitable university for me. AYBU is not a university I wanted, but I was also interested in other universities, but I wanted to study in Ankara. Ankara was a better place for me and Ankara for future plans – AYBU21-

This finding highlighted the significant role that entrance exam scores played in determining university placement in Türkiye. Some of the participants had aspired to attend more established universities with well-known histories and reputations. By some participants, well-established universities were often perceived as offering better educational quality and having a more notable track record of successful graduates.

Rich social environment of city. Many participants noted that Ankara, being the center of the country's central administration, ministries, and the headquarters of public institutions, holds significant bureaucratic importance. Often referred to as a bureaucratic city, it was seen as a hub for government and administrative activities. However, despite its bureaucratic reputation, Ankara was also regarded as a student-friendly city by nearly all participants, thanks to its social amenities and cultural activities. This dual character of Ankara, combining its role as the political capital with vibrant cultural and social opportunities, made it a unique bridge between administrative significance and enriching student life.

The findings highlighted that Ankara's status as the capital city contributed to its perception as a bureaucratic center. Some participants appreciated the proximity to governmental bodies and institutions, which they believed could offer valuable opportunities for internships, networking, and understanding the workings of public administration. This aspect of Ankara was particularly appealing to students interested in careers in public service.

Furthermore, nearly all participants emphasized that Ankara's social and cultural offerings significantly enhance their student experience. The city was home to numerous theaters, museums, concerts, and libraries, providing ample opportunities for cultural enrichment. Some noted that Ankara offered extensive social amenities, particularly emphasizing the availability of alternative study spaces such as cafes within library designs. Prominent libraries like the National Library of Türkiye and the Nation’s Library among the largest in Türkiye, provided easy access to a vast array of resources. These libraries not only served as excellent study environments but also ensured that students could readily find the materials they need for their academic pursuits. From a social perspective, Ankara was enriched with cultural institutions such as state theaters and the Republic Symphony Orchestra. These venues offered concerts and performances that contributed to a culturally fulfilling student life. The combination of these academic and social resources made Ankara an appealing city for students, providing both intellectual and cultural nourishment.

The findings indicated that Ankara's social infrastructure significantly supported students' academic and extracurricular activities. The well-equipped libraries offered conducive environments for study and research, while the abundance of cultural events and institutions provided diverse opportunities for social engagement and enrichment. This blend of academic support and cultural vibrancy made Ankara an ideal city for students seeking a balanced and enriching university experience.

English-medium instruction in the university. AYBU was an English-medium institution where all courses, except for the compulsory Turkish Language and Atatürk's Principles and Reforms courses mandated by the CoHE were conducted entirely in English. Many participants reported attending English preparatory classes at the School of Foreign Languages located in Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus. Upon

meeting the required conditions to pass the preparatory program, they proceed to their respective departments.

Some participants expressed that studying at an English-medium university distinguished them and provided a competitive edge. This finding showed the perceived advantages of receiving education in English. Most of participants believed that their proficiency in English developed through their university coursework enhanced their academic and professional prospects. They viewed their ability to study and communicate in English as a significant asset, particularly in an increasingly globalized job market. That means the emphasis on AYBU as English-medium university was highly valued by most of the participants, as it not only prepared them for their academic programs but also enhanced their future employability and global competitiveness. This bilingual capability was perceived as a key factor that set them apart from their peers in the job market.

Newly-establishment status of the university. Some participants frequently compared themselves to other public universities in Ankara. When describing their own university, they tended to evaluate their academic, social, and psychological experiences against their observations of other public universities in Ankara or based on the experiences of friends attending other institutions in the city. Some participants highlighted that their university was relatively new, with a few even noting that it previously existed under a different name and identity. This finding illustrated a tendency among students to benchmark their university experience against more established institutions. The comparisons often stemmed from a desire to assess the quality and reputation of their own university in relation to others. This could impact their perception of the academic environment, social opportunities, and overall student life at their university**.** For example, two participants stated that:

> Our university is a new university, so it does not have so much experience compared to well-established universities such as Middle East Technical University and Hacettepe University. That's why we can already feel that there are points that are not settled because of it compared to other universities – AYBU27 –
>
> We know the history of other universities in Ankara, such as Ankara University and Middle East Technical University; we can see what they have achieved. Even their social activities make them more appealing. But when you look at

> the history of newly established universities, they do not have much of a past; they are just starting out and haven't had as much time to develop. Yes, there may be a university in Ankara, but you see, even a concert event might have happened only once and never again – AYBU8 -

Some participants expressed uncertainty about where graduates of their university worked and what they did professionally. They highlighted that their university was reestablished after taking over another institution, making it a relatively new university without a long-standing history or established culture. Due to not having long history, the university did not fully develop its own identity. As a result, its strengths and areas for improvement were not as clearly defined. The absence of a clear track record for graduates contributed to the uncertainty about the university's reputation and effectiveness. Some participants suggested that gathering feedback and opinions from alumni could be crucial for the university's development. Unlike well-established higher education institutions such as Middle East Technical University, Hacettepe University and etc., which were renowned for their quality and have a strong reputation in the job market despite often having lower average GPAs due to their rigorous standards, AYBU was still striving to prove itself within Türkiye's higher education landscape. For example, one participant stated that:

> Even if your GPA is good, I have friends with an average of over 3. Even when I talk to them, I know that they have trouble finding an internship. At this point, it is troublesome that the university is a little more passive. Some of our exams are difficult. Of course, our exams can be difficult. Our department may be difficult, but the difficulty of this department is the exam of this university... For example, let me give an example, whether it is a Middle East Technical University or Hacettepe University, they are difficult universities, but these universities have a reputation in the society. So, when people from these universities go somewhere, even if they have a low average, their perspective changes when they mention the university they graduated from. But there is a similar situation at AYBU in terms of grades. Exams are difficult, so averages are low. There is also such a problem at our university. Failure to establish enough connections, the university's inability to prove itself sufficiently causes such a problem. Employers will hire employees and pay them a salary. The person he employs is the basic building block. Therefore, the university with which they establish connections must have reached a certain point. These deficiencies are major deficiencies in terms of quality – AYBU 27 -

According to some participants, while AYBU adopted an approach focused on excellence and quality, it faced perception challenges because it had not yet established a solid reputation. This lack of recognition affected its standing in the eyes of potential

employers and the broader academic community. AYBU's efforts to achieve excellence were commendable by some participants, but its relatively short history mean it must continue to work on building its identity and demonstrating the value of its education through the success of its graduates.

Ideologically coded identity of the university. Some participants felt that the university had an ideological identity that influenced the campus environment, leading to a sense of pressure and constraint. They mentioned avoiding certain topics and feeling restricted in their conversations due to ideological, sociological, and religious pressures. This environment made them feel uncomfortable and insecure, particularly regarding discussions on political or social issues. They sensed that their opinions might not be respected and were concerned about potential repercussions even for minor actions. This atmosphere of constraint reminded them of the rigid rules they experienced in high school. For example, one participant stated that:

> The university needs to stop promoting certain views. By the way, I am not talking about Party A or Party B. I don't care what party they belong to, but I do not like the imposition of their party on me. I would like them to be weeded out. I would like to weed out the people with this behavior who try to impose this. Instead, I would like to receive education in a more impartial way and to receive education with those who want to give education. I would like the university to change its position – AYBU19 -

This finding highlighted a significant challenge within the university environment, where students felt a lack of freedom to express their thoughts openly. The perception of an ideologically charged atmosphere contributed to their discomfort and fear of being judged or facing consequences for their views. This stifling environment was seen as counterproductive to the open exchange of ideas.

Separated campuses. Some participants discussed the university's presence in various parts of the city. They noted that the separated campuses hindered student socialization and communication between different departments and disciplines. This separated campus structure was seen as an obstacle to fostering a cohesive university community. One participant remarked on the surprising contrast with European universities, where different universities were often merged, while in their experience, even the campuses of the same university in Türkiye were spread out. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think there should only be one campus for the university. I read somewhere that universities are merging in Europe, or something like that. I am not sure if you have heard about it. Here, they are also trying to do something similar. For it to be considered one university, all departments should be in the same place, on the same campus. Departments should not be separated. For example, we never see law students; we cannot talk with them – AYBU2 -

In addition, they found that each campus had a distinct atmosphere. This finding showed the challenges posed by a separated campus system. The physical separation of campuses limited opportunities for students from different fields of study to interact, collaborate, and share ideas. This separation led to a fragmented student experience, where the sense of a unified university community was weakened. Additionally, the distinct atmospheres of each campus contributed to a sense of isolation among students. The distinct atmospheres of each campus further caused to a fragmented student experience. It highlighted the need for a more cohesive and integrated campus environment to enhance the sense of community and collaboration. For example, one participant stated that:

> This is actually the case for most universities in Türkiye, but we have no connection with other campuses. We have nothing to do with them because we are already far away. They have nothing to do with each other because their locations are very far away from each other. There is nothing for them to interact with. I am saying this because this is the biggest campus. If there is an event, a festival, even Nevruz, where all university students can gather here, where we can take a step, maybe students from other departments can come to socialize – AYBU19 -

Continuous increase in student quotas. Some participants identified the continuous central increase in enrollment quotas to AYBU as a significant issue, noting problems such as students being unable to find seats in classrooms and the persistent rise in the number of students within specific departments. This increase in student numbers inevitably led to employment challenges in these fields, as the job market becomes overly saturated with graduates. The difficulty in understanding the rationale behind the expansion of enrollment quotas became particularly pronounced when considering that Türkiye was likely to face employment shortages in these areas.

4.1.4.1.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of academic engagement, four sub-themes are obtained. These four sub-themes are called (I) academic staff, (II) teaching, (III) infrastructure and resources, and (IV) academic culture.

4.1.4.1.2.1 Academic Staff

In terms of academic staff, the findings of AYBU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) extensive network with public and private sector, (ii) insufficient English-speaking skills, (iii) academic workload, and (iv) differentiated communication skills.

Extensive network with public and private sector. It was observed that faculty members were actively engaged in fieldwork. According to participants, these faculty members had strong connections in both the public and private sectors. They were actively involved in various committees under the Presidency and ministries, and they shared their experiences from these roles with their students. In addition, some indicated that some of the faculty members who they took courses from were invited as guests on television programs. Some participants even noted that, due to this extensive network, certain professors took advantage of Ankara's position as the seat of central government to invite high-level officials to their classes, providing students with the opportunity to interact directly with these influential figures.

This enabled them to invite these distinguished individuals as guest speakers to their classes. Such invitations provided students with the opportunity to hear firsthand accounts and practical insights from experienced professionals, as well as to engage in direct questioning. This engagement not only enriched the students' educational experience but also bridged academic learning with practical insights from current governmental and industry practices.

Insufficient English-speaking skills. Despite participants perceiving the university's policy of using English as the medium of instruction as an advantage, they identified certain shortcomings in the English-speaking skills of some faculty members. Specifically, some faculty members were seen as insufficient in their ability to effectively communicate in English, particularly due to their accents. This occasionally resulted in difficulties in conveying course material clearly.

It was observed that while faculty members were proficient in the English terminology relevant to their fields, their spoken language skills sometimes limited their ability to ensure students fully comprehend and deeply understand these terms. Some participants noted that the explanation and contextualization of specialized terms were often hindered by the instructors' speaking abilities. For instance, while faculty members could accurately use technical vocabulary, the lack of fluency and the presence of a language barrier prevented them from explaining these terms in details. These participants expected to hear more tangible sentences for clear understanding of terminologies. This sometimes resulted in abstract understanding rather than practical application. For example, two participants stated that:

> Something can be done in terms of foreign language for faculty members. Our professors, of course, since they have English education, our professors have English, but sometimes they are not very fluent. They think a lot about words, especially when explaining some terms. My English is not very good either, but I am a student, so I don't make such a claim. I mean, I expect a faculty member to speak more fluent English – AYBU23 –

> Most of them are actually qualified professors, but for example, our department provides 100% English education. I can think that they are a bit lacking in that regard because sometimes they have difficulty in giving courses. They can convey what they want to say better, for example, when they summarize in Turkish in the course break. But when they try to explain it in English, for example, if they explain it on a slide, it is not so easy for them to convey it – AYBU16 -

Academic workload. Most of the participants found the faculty members to be highly competent in terms of academic quality. They were particularly impressed by the academics' experiences at internationally prestigious universities. Firstly, the international academic experiences of the faculty members contributed significantly to their perceived academic quality. Students appreciated advanced knowledge that these professors bring to the university, enhancing its academic prestige.

However, some participants emphasized the numerous responsibilities that academics were required to manage, highlighting the difficulty of simultaneously engaging in teaching, research, and research and development (R&D) activities. They noted that handling all these tasks concurrently was particularly challenging. Some of the participants suggested that distinguishing between faculty members based on their primary focus—whether teaching, research, or R&D—could enhance academic

performance. They expressed that by allowing faculty to specialize in one area, their efficiency and effectiveness in that specific domain would likely increase. This specialization, according to the participants, would lead to improved outcomes in each respective area, thereby benefiting the overall academic environment.

In fact, these findings stemmed from the perceived inadequacies in teaching activities among certain faculty members. Some participants noted that some faculty members exhibited superior teaching skills, fostering a greater affinity for their courses among students. They highlighted that the more passionate instructors were about their subjects, the more engaged students became. Consequently, some participants suggested that just as obtaining pedagogical formation training was critical for teaching in K-12 schools, a similar approach was necessary for enhancing the teaching activities of faculty members in universities. They proposed that providing pedagogical formation training tailored to the needs of higher education could significantly contribute to the improvement of teaching quality among faculty members, ultimately enhancing student learning experiences and outcomes. For example, one participant stated that:

> It depends a little bit more on the roots of the system, but if a teacher takes pedagogical formation or pedagogical training in order to be appointed, the person in the academy should also take it. It should be given by competent people. If there is a person who wants to stay in the academy, let her/him teach at the university, but let her/him have to receive pedagogical training. If I just want to do science, I want to do research, I want to continue my life in this way, let her/him offer something like R&D. Not all professors should teach. Some professors cannot keep students in class. It is also ridiculous to fight with students in class. If s/he knows how to communicate with the student with the right pedagogical training, s/he attracts the student in the class. More integrity is achieved and more university atmosphere is experienced – AYBU22 -

Differentiated communication skills. The participants' experiences with faculty communication both inside and outside the classroom varied significantly. Some participants noted that certain faculty members approached them with a condescending attitude, using a more distant and formal language. It created communication barriers. This perceived aloofness hindered effective interaction and make students feel less comfortable in academic exchanges.

Conversely, some faculty members were praised for their strong communication with students. These academics were described as approachable and engaging, even when holding high academic titles. These participants expressed delight and appreciation when faculty members communicated warmly and openly, which fostered a positive and supportive learning environment. The motivating statements and guidance provided by these approachable faculty members were particularly valued. They offered advice on professional careers, social issues, and personal development, contributing significantly to the students' growth. Some participants reported experiencing enlightenment through these interactions, highlighting the impact of meaningful faculty-student interactions. For example, one participant stated that:

> As far as I have experienced so far, most of our professors are interested in us and they are very active. Maybe it is related to my department, they do not bore us. They do not proceed in a monotonous way. They attract our attention. I really like this aspect of the professors. Our professors have this approach in every subject since the day we started. I learned a lot about the university, they are also like guidance counselors. They guide us and inform us. They make us feel like we are in a family – AYBU 13 -

The strong communication between faculty and students at AYBU contrasted sharply with the experiences of their friends at other institutions, where faculty members maintained a more detached demeanor. These students noted that their peers at other universities often felt discomfort due to the distant attitude of their professors. In contrast, the supportive and engaging approach of their own faculty members was seen as a significant advantage by some participants of this study.

4.1.4.1.2.2 Teaching

In terms of teaching, the findings of AYBU case can be divided into seven parts named as (i) intensive course load, (ii) limitations in English language proficiency, (iii) shaping the course contents generally with a focus of theoretical knowledge, (iv) ineffectiveness of online teaching, (v) harder exams in online period, (vi) different evaluation mechanisms and feedback, and (vii) internship experiences regarding professional life.

Intensive course load. Some participants indicated that they were confronted with a heavy course load. Intensive course load included meeting assignment deadlines, preparing for exams, and coping with the dense content delivery by instructors. The

intensity of the course schedule posed significant challenges for students in managing their time effectively and maintaining a balanced workload. Furthermore, the instructors' focus on dense knowledge transfer exacerbated the pressure on students to absorb and process large amounts of information within limited timeframes.

Especially, the participants from the Department of Architecture reported that the extreme academic workload left them with little to no life outside of their studies. They specifically mentioned that in order to complete their projects, especially before jury evaluations, they often spent nights working in the studios at their faculty. This intense commitment to meeting academic deadlines significantly impacted their ability to engage in extracurricular activities or maintain a balanced personal life. On the other hand, field trips to different cities were organized for architecture students, such as visits to Diyarbakır to study architectural structures with their instructors. The participants from the Department of Architecture believed these field studies were valuable and participated enthusiastically. However, they covered the expenses themselves, which sometimes left them financially strained.

Furthermore, architecture participants noted the significance of “construction” and “design” in architectural education, highlighting that some architecture faculties prioritized construction while others emphasized design in their curriculum. However, one participant expressed struggling to meet the design expectations of their faculty due to feeling limited in their creativity after completing their architecture education.

Overall, some participants expressed a lack of understanding regarding how to study effectively at the university level and struggled to grasp the formula for success. They were uncertain about whether to focus on daily or weekly study routines, or whether to intensify their efforts before exams. However, some later realized the importance of internalizing the knowledge and understanding the learning process.

Limitations in English language proficiency. After the central university entrance exam, the English preparatory year was seen as a relatively more relaxing period with fewer academic pressures. During this time, participants’ primary focus was on passing the preparatory class to begin their major studies. This year was also perceived as an opportunity for students to explore Ankara and spend time with friends. Most of the participants appreciated this period as a chance to acclimate to university life.

However, during this relaxation phase, some participants reported that despite their efforts to focus on developing their foreign language skills, they were unable to achieve an advanced level of proficiency in English. Some participants with friends at Middle East Technical University mentioned that their English language prep school was perceived to be more effective. They acknowledged that their own insufficient effort contributed to their difficulties with English once they transitioned to their major courses. For example, one participant stated that:

> The prep school was very comfortable for me in terms of traveling and gallivanting. I already had an English background, but that's why it was not a period that I hung on like that. If I say the preparatory education, I think it was not very adequate, but somehow it was over. As far as I can see, it is not like the Middle East Technical University preparation because it starts very basic here, it did not add much to me academically. Of course, there were a few things I learned, but it wasn't enough, I don't think it was a university-level preparation, and I think it still is, my brother is studying here, he is in the preparatory program – AYBU15 -

Some participants reported that their insufficient English language skills significantly hindered their ability to comprehend courses and actively participated in class. Many students felt reluctant to ask questions due to their lack of confidence in their English proficiency. Additionally, some students have confessed that they were unable to answer midterm and final exam questions because they did not fully understand them. This issue was particularly pronounced in the context of more complex or technical subjects, where precise language comprehension was crucial. For instance, one participant stated that:

> The courses that stress me out in university life are those taught in English. Despite having completed an English preparatory program, it is still an English exam, but this time, it is also an academic exam. Sometimes, when I take the exam, I do not understand the question, so I start reading it as if I understand it psychologically, and I write random things, but in reality, I do not understand what it is asking. In high school, we used to take notes on what the teacher might ask, but here, we do not have that opportunity – AYBU7 -

Shaping the course contents generally with a focus of theoretical knowledge. Some participants expressed concerns that the predominantly theoretical focus of the course limited their opportunities for practical application. Additionally, there were notable differences in participants' feedback regarding the theoretical instruction. Some participants mentioned that the theoretical explanations were tailored for higher-level

students, which made it difficult for them to understand. They felt that the content was too advanced and not aligned with their current level of knowledge. Conversely, some other participants reported that the theoretical instruction did not meet their potential, as it was too basic and did not provide enough depth or challenge. These students expected more comprehensive and detailed content from the course. This divergence in student feedback highlighted the varying levels of preparedness and expectations among the participants. For example, one participant stated that:

> My friends from different universities or my friends in the same department or nursing department have seen cadavers, we have not seen cadavers yet. They are taught at a lower theoretical level than us. Actually, we should go and see cadavers too, but the university could not provide us with this opportunity. They keep saying that we will go, but we could not get a place for us at Bilkent City Hospital. We can go separately, but there is not even equality of opportunity among students – AYBU7 -

However, there were also departments where practical courses were predominant. For example, the participants from the Department of Architecture and Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation reported difficulties in adapting to this shift. These students experienced challenges transitioning from an education system in high school that focused more on theoretical knowledge to one that emphasized practical application in their university courses. This shift created issues in adjusting to the teaching methods and understanding the course content. For example, one participant stated that:

> I do not know if it is the same in other faculties, but in architecture, high school feels completely over. They handed me triangles and rectangles, expecting something concrete from me with something entirely abstract. They expected production from me. My first year passed like a blur, and in my second year, I started to get used to it a bit. I am so tired, so drained, that I just do not feel like working. In other departments, I am not sure if it is like this, but architecture is really tough in that sense. Morning, evening, day, night, it does not matter; you are constantly at the computer, constantly trying to keep up with the workload. Otherwise, you cannot graduate from school – AYBU10 -

Some participants noted that some instructors tended to focus excessively on theoretical concepts without bringing practical ideas to the classroom, leading to a sense of inadequacy among students. This was often exacerbated by the instructors' tendency to delve too deeply into details and not allowing students to contribute to

intellectual discussions. Moreover, there was a scarcity of instructors who actively encouraged student participation in class discussions.

Ineffectiveness of online teaching. Most of participants perceived themselves as very unfortunate due to their university experience coinciding with the online period, as they were unable to experience the traditional aspects of university life. The absence of impersonal relations with instructors and peers led to feelings of isolation and a diminished sense of belonging within the university community. Firstly, the shift to online learning created substantial challenges in maintaining focus and concentration. The merging of living and learning spaces made it difficult for students to establish clear boundaries between their personal and academic environments. It resulted in a constant presence of distractions. The lack of a dedicated study space further compounded the problem, making it challenging to remain focused during courses and study sessions. Secondly, the home environment introduced a variety of distractions not typically encountered in a traditional classroom setting. Household noises, interactions with family members, and the allure of leisure activities such as television frequently disrupted students' study routines. For example, one participant stated that:

> I was never like studying at university in online period. It was no different for me than watching a YouTube video or a video on any platform. I never felt like I was studying at university that semester. I always felt like I was on vacation. I don't think our university was able to succeed in online teaching. I was very unhappy in online teaching. When I look at the subject deficiencies now, I see that they are always due to the online period. It was very inadequate. I couldn't stand at the beginning of the course and listen to it, I couldn't focus because it was online – AYBU24 -

During the online period, some participants struggled to engage in classes due to a perceived lack of learning potential. Several factors contributed to this challenge. Firstly, instructors' lack of adherence to class schedules in online sessions resulted in the absence of visual cues, such as facial expressions and gestures. It diminished students' connection to the courses. Moreover, the absence of mandatory attendance and the option to skip classes without consequence further exacerbated students' reluctance to participate actively.

Additionally, some participants encountered difficulties in maintaining focus and attention during online classes, often experiencing distractions and even falling asleep.

They underlined the simultaneous delivery of face-to-face and online instruction posed unique challenges, as online teaching demanded greater mental exertion from students than face-to-face instruction. At the onset of the pandemic, students faced no issues with turning on their cameras during online classes. However, the lack of synchronous participation and failure to engage in class activities prompted the implementation of mandatory camera usage to ensure active participation and enhance the learning experience. For example, one participant stated that:

> The education I received; we came across online education for a semester. Since we came across this semester, I am frankly not sure about the education I received. I am not sure whether my education was good or not. I even think it was bad. We had a bad education. I think it was due to online education because I could not experience face-to-face education much, I don't know what kind of difference there could have been, but like some periods, we see these periods coincided with the pandemic and earthquake in my student life. I inevitably got away from the class – AYBU23 -

Harder exams in online period. Some participants noted that during their first experiences with online exams, many students resorted to cheating. In response, instructors made efforts to prevent this by employing alternative methods. The instructors made exam questions significantly more difficult compared to traditional in-person exams and allotted limited time to restrict students' ability to communicate with each other. However, students expressed struggling with exams due to the combination of ineffective online teaching and the challenges posed by stringent exam conditions during the pandemic period. For this reason, some participants expressed that their GPAs at the university decreased.

During the data collection process for ADYU case, the researcher directly witnessed an incident regarding online exams. Despite the end of the pandemic, some courses continued to be delivered online at universities. During the interview, the participant received a call from a friend from another university, who asked them to take an online mathematics exam on his/her behalf. The participant mentioned that he had promised to solve the exam for his friend. Therefore, they requested a 30-minute break from the researcher to fulfill their commitment.

Different evaluation mechanisms and feedback. Some participants commonly reported that their performance was primarily assessed through midterm and final

exams. They noted that in these written assessments, there was a significant emphasis on rote memorization. This approach often directed students towards focusing on memorizing facts and information rather than fostering deeper understanding or critical thinking skills. As a result, the evaluation process tended to prioritize the ability to recall specific details over the capacity to analyze and apply knowledge effectively. However, there were also instructors who assessed students through assignments and projects. In these courses, alternative assessments were noted to be more effective in expressing one's development and learning. These participants mentioned that project-based courses allowed them to showcase their efforts more visibly and can be more impactful for their learning journey.

Furthermore, some participants also discussed issues arising from the evaluation process being conducted by different individuals, particularly in non-multiple-choice exams. They noted that having exams graded by various research assistants or faculty members led to inconsistencies in grading. This variability might result in unfairness in grading, as each grader might focus on different aspects of the exam, leading to discrepancies in the grades assigned to individuals who provided similar responses.

Additionally, some participants mentioned that they often had classes in crowded classrooms due to the increasing university and department quotas. They were aware of the difficulty for instructors to provide individual feedback to each student in such large classes. These participants noted that instructors also acknowledged the challenges of providing feedback and might not always take the necessary steps in this regard. For example, one participant stated that:

> Some instructors give the reading of the exams to the research assistants. They focus on some places and different points. This creates problems for us, but other than that there is no problem. Since the assistants also evaluate the answers according to themselves other than the instructor's own answer key. Even if we have done the same things as our friends, we can get different grades when evaluated by other assistants. The evaluation of the instructors and the evaluation of the assistants can sometimes be very different. Assistants are more prone to breaking grades than students. Instructors can be a little more tolerant. They try to help in this regard. Assistants are a bit harsher in this regard – AYBU25 -

However, in the Faculty of Architecture where practical courses were intense and evaluation was conducted through juries, participants' perspectives on evaluation

varied. When presenting their individually-prepared or group-prepared models to the jury, participants noted that the particularly stern attitudes of evaluation juries. Moreover, the inconsistency among jury members regarding the dimensions valued by instructors left students unsure of what aspects to prioritize. Instead of reflecting their own views and ideas in the project models, these students found themselves compelled to think from the perspective and mindset of instructors to attain higher grades.

Internship experiences regarding professional life. Some participants conveyed that their internship experiences provided valuable opportunities to witness the practical application of concepts learned in their coursework. They emphasized the pivotal role internships played in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge gained in classes and its real-world implementation. Additionally, participants noted instances where they encountered new content or gained deeper insights into course material that was not covered comprehensively in their classes. This exposure was facilitated by the abundance of internship opportunities available in Ankara. They underlined Ankara had numerous ministries, governmental agencies, and private sector companies offering diverse internship prospects.

Furthermore, some participants highlighted how internships served as a platform for identifying gaps in their academic learning. Through hands-on experience in professional settings, they often gained a clearer understanding of areas where their theoretical knowledge might be lacking or incomplete. That means, some participants found that their theoretical understanding was enhanced as a result of their internship experiences.

4.1.4.1.2.3. Infrastructure and Resources

In terms of infrastructure and resources, the findings of AYBU case can be divided into three parts named as (i) absence of well-equipped library, (ii) inequality of opportunity in access to labs across campuses, and (iii) problems in the internet connection.

Absence of well-equipped library. Participants noted disparities in library resources across different campuses of the university. They highlighted that the main campus, Esenboğa, boasted a large library, while the libraries on their respective campuses

were comparatively smaller. Access to printed resources through campus libraries was often deemed inadequate, but participants mentioned easy access to electronic resources through university databases. Electronic systems offered significant utility by providing access to data regardless of location or time constraints. This accessibility enabled students to retrieve information whenever needed, enhancing convenience and flexibility in information retrieval processes. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think the library could be better, it could be bigger. From a distance, we should be able to understand that it is a library. Then you would want to sit there, you would want to study there, studying at home does not work because your mind wanders, but when there is a library, you get excited – AYBU6 -

Interestingly, students from the Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus scarcely mentioned their university libraries in their discourse. They emphasized feeling that their university libraries were insufficient when compared to those of institutions like Middle East Technical University and Bilkent University. Generally, they expressed a preference for utilizing the National Library or the Nation's Library for their study and research needs. On the other hand, in situations where some participants found access to printed resources through the university library inadequate, they leveraged the advantage of Ankara's numerous bookstores. Even if they did not make purchases, they could physically browse through books, gaining valuable insights and information.

Inequality of opportunity in access to labs across campuses. The participants from the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences located on the Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus mentioned that they conducted laboratory work within the same campus premises. They emphasized that the laboratories were adequate both in terms of equipment and materials. This indicated that students had access to the necessary resources to engage in practical experimentation and research activities, contributing to a comprehensive learning experience within their field of study.

On the other hand, the participants from the Faculty of Architecture located on the main campus, Esenboğa, mentioned working in workshops at night to complete their models. They highlighted that the workshop spaces sometimes fell short in accommodating all students, and there were instances where they had to resort to digital work on computers. However, they encountered difficulties in the computer laboratories, as they were unable to access personal files with their individual

passwords. Consequently, they could not resume their work from where they left off, leading to the loss of progress.

It was revealed that the participants in the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation received their theoretical courses at the Esenboğa Campus, while their practical sessions took place in the laboratories of Faculty of Medicine at AYBU's Bilkent Campus. These participants emphasized the challenges of attending classes in campuses located at considerable distances from each other to receive practical courses and laboratory studies. Furthermore, they criticized the absence of dedicated laboratories on their own campus. When they visited the Bilkent Campus, they also expressed disappointment over the lack of a warm reception and felt as if they were forcibly using the laboratories intended for the Faculty of Medicine, contributing to a sense of unease. For example, one participant stated that:

> Sometimes, there are facilities provided, but when you go to the hospital, those facilities aren't available. They just brush you off there. Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University should be supporting us. When we send you to the hospital, they should say, 'We have got your back. Someone will take care of you, and you will get what you need from there.' That's what I would have liked to hear – AYBU9 -

Problems in the internet connection. Some participants expressed facing frequent connectivity issues with mobile internet networks due to the Esenboğa Campus. This was because being located at a distance from the city center and situated in a steppe area with limited surrounding settlements. They emphasized that these connectivity problems sometimes posed challenges in conducting their activities on the system and communicating with their families and friends, underscoring the inconvenience caused by such issues. For example, one participant stated that:

> Apart from that, I think the internet infrastructure is incredibly bad. We use very bad internet both at university and in the dormitory. The operator on my own phone does not connect to the internet. I cannot video chat with my family. When I have something to do on the internet, I cannot do that, I have to go somewhere or when the intensity of people using the internet decreases at a certain time. I have more opportunities to use it. I have such problems – AYBU18 –

4.1.4.1.2.4. Academic Culture

In terms of academic culture, the findings of AYBU case can be divided into three parts named as (i) prominent internationalization efforts, (ii) widespread use of abbreviation of the university name within the university, and (iii) need for orientation activities.

Prominent internationalization efforts. Some participants highlighted the incorporation of a wide range of national and international sources in their courses, a trend attributed to the English-medium university. Moreover, faculty members were noted to frequently recommend internationally renowned resources to students during academic interactions and knowledge-sharing sessions. This practice underscored a deliberate effort to expose students to diverse perspectives and cutting-edge research from around the world, enriching their educational experience.

Moreover, some participants expressed noticing the presence of international students at their university beyond statistical observation. While they supported having international students, they criticized the fact that those coming to AYBU were predominantly from Arab and African countries. They advocated for AYBU to attract students from Europe the Americas, or Far East. They also noted that the countries of origin of international students influenced the university's culture. Particularly, they mentioned observing cultural elements and attire from Arab countries on campus. For example, one participant stated that:

> Actually, it is the same in other departments as well as in our department. I am not racist, but there are many Afghan and Syrian students as international students, of course they can be here. But let there be European international students as well. When there are only Arabs, it becomes Arab culture in the faculty. I looked around on campus the other day, there was something. You know those clothes Arabs wear? I see them – AYBU4 -

On the other hand, the participants described Erasmus programs as a fantastic experience offering the chance to meet people from diverse cultures. Erasmus programs enabled them to practice speaking a foreign language in a foreign country They also highlighted the opportunity to witness firsthand what's happening in the world, see things from the perspective of people outside Türkiye, and encounter different ideas by separating themselves from Türkiye. However, it emerged that there

were disadvantages to having a higher number of international students within AYBU, as expressed by one participant. He mentioned that foreign language exam score was a significant evaluation criterion in Erasmus programs. It was indicated that international students surpassed him in meeting this criterion, thus hindering his own utilization of Erasmus opportunities. For example, one participant stated that:

> They put international students in the same basket as us. How can I say it? For example, the Erasmus exam. In this exam, we are all in the same boat. When we take a foreign language exam, the top one or two can go to Erasmus. However, international students are also included in this filter. For example, I missed the Erasmus exam by one point, and instead of me, an international student went to Erasmus. I feel that the importance is not given to international students as it is given to Turks in our university. In exams, they already know English, they take English courses with us, and they surpass our average – AYBU3 -

Widespread use of abbreviation of the university name within the university. Nearly all of the participants clearly exhibited a tendency to use the abbreviation of their university's name rather than its full name when discussing their institution. The abbreviation "AYBU" was widely accepted and adopted by the university community. This preference for the abbreviation over the full name indicated several underlying factors. Firstly, the abbreviation was more convenient and quicker to use in verbal communication. It simplified interactions and reduced the effort required to refer to the university. Secondly, the adoption of "AYBU" reflected a sense of identity and belonging among participants. The use of a common abbreviation seemed to reinforce a collective identity within the university community.

Additionally, the widespread acceptance of the abbreviation suggested effective internal branding. The university successfully promoted "AYBU" as a recognizable and distinct identifier. This internal branding likely contributed to a stronger and more cohesive institutional image. To sum up, the preference for using the abbreviation "AYBU" over the university's full name was a notable finding. It highlighted the convenience, sense of community, and effective internal branding within the university.

Need for orientation activities. After enduring the rigorous centralized university entrance exams in high school, most of the participants often underwent an English preparatory education, which tended to be perceived as a period of relative relaxation.

However, upon transitioning to their academic programs, students frequently encountered a significant increase in academic intensity. A major contributing factor to this difficulty was the underdeveloped communication and information network within the university. In the absence of a comprehensive system to keep students informed and to provide preliminary information about processes, participants were often left to chase down information on their own. This lack of a structured communication system added to their fatigue and stress. This issue highlighted the need for AYBU to establish orientation systems that could alleviate the additional burden on students. For instance, one participant stated that:

> Something like psychological guidance or orientation can be organized because we are just starting our first semester at university. There is a newness. Are we not going to get any information? How will the classes be? Everything is so new for us. Something more psychological, I don't know, new, guidance style can be done about this. I think they can deal with it more individually, especially – AYBU13 -

For example, in the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation, there was a noteworthy initiative known as "Origo" that standed out as a departmental effort to foster interaction among students across different academic levels. At this juncture, collaboration with the student club named the Physical Theraphy and Rehabilitation student club was also observed. Facilitated by an academic coordinator, the department and the mentioned student club members organized Origo sessions which brought together students from various stages of their academic journey within the department. During these Origo sessions, senior students had the opportunity to pose questions to junior students, junior students engaged with sophomore students, and sophomore students connected with freshman students. Through this structured organization, students not only sought clarification on academic matters but also navigated the dynamics of the department. It fostered integration, acclimatization, and an understanding of departmental dynamics. This research finding underscored the importance of such orientation activities in facilitating students' adaptation to the department. It seemed to enhance their learning experience and to promote a sense of community within the academic environment.

4.1.4.1.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of psychological engagement, six sub-themes are obtained. These six sub-themes are called (I) differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities, (II) varied influences of family dynamics, (III) personal development, (IV) dealing with stress, (V) anxiety for the future, and (VI) psychological wellbeing.

Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities. A significant observation was that, apart from a few exceptions, most participants experienced their first independent living away from their families during their university years, excluding those who resided with their families in Ankara. The exceptions primarily included participants who attended boarding schools during their high school years. In the realm of individual living experiences, having full control over everything was perceived to contribute to a sense of empowerment. Experiencing the responsibility of managing one's affairs independently for the first time in a different location was viewed as a fantastic journey.

However, this sense of empowerment did not manifest immediately at the beginning of university. On the contrary, they felt worn out due to the overwhelming responsibilities thrust upon them early in their university journey. While in their family homes, even their personal affairs were taken care of by their families, but now, they found themselves juggling various responsibilities simultaneously. Being away from home necessitated taking on responsibilities that were previously shouldered by their families. Tasks such as doing laundry, cooking, caring for themselves when they fell ill, ironing, cleaning, managing bills, and maintaining relationships with landlords were now their own responsibilities. On the other hand, the participants residing with their families in Ankara indicated that they led a university life that closely resembled their high school experience. Transitioning from home to university and vice versa did not significantly alter their university lifestyle from that of high school. Particularly, many household chores continued to be managed by other family members. For example, one participant stated that:

> I need to experience how to deposit and withdraw money from a bank, how to pay electricity bills, how to connect electricity, and how to build a relationship

> with the landlord. It is all about gaining experience for me. That is why I said it would be better to go out of town. It is also an experience after all. I enjoy experiencing new things, but let's not lie, it is tough, but beautiful – AYBU5 -

Varied influence of family dynamics. It was observed that participants from different cities initially experienced homesickness. Some even mentioned that their families constantly called or video called them because they were curious and concerned about their wellbeing. While they became accustomed to being away from their families, many participants' families still strived to stay closely informed about them, even from a distance. They inquired about various aspects of their lives, such as whether they are getting enough sleep, preparing meals, feeling unwell, or keeping up with their studies. Some participants refrained from fully disclosing negative experiences in their lives to their families so as not to worry them. Due to their financial situations, they might not adequately nourish themselves, and they might struggle to concentrate on their studies due to problems in their romantic relationships. However, some participants underlined that individuals often failed to appreciate the value of things that were close to them. University life which could be characterized by distance from one's family served as a catalyst for these participants to better understand the significance of their familial bonds.

Two participants, despite previously living with their families in different cities, mentioned that their families relocated to Ankara after they were admitted to university there. They stated that their families made this move to ensure their comfort and to prevent feelings of loneliness. However, participants who had previously lived with their families and experienced this change highlighted that their families still exerted control over their lives. For example, they still had to be accountable for their comings and goings times to their families. In addition, their families expected explanations about who they spent time with. This indicated that their dependency on their families persisted. For example, one participant stated that:

> Having my family around does a little bit of a thing. You know, they want to check all the time. Naturally, where are you, what are you doing, what time will you be back? Come on, we're going to bed, come home now. You know how they do that now. As long as I tell them where I am and who I am with, there is no problem. When we communicate like I will be back at this time or I'm on my way back, there is no problem – AYBU16 -

On the other hand, the participants' accounts suggested that individuals living with their families tended to experience family issues more closely. It could adversely affect their academic performance. For instance, one participant narrated how domestic disputes proved to be challenging for students residing with their families. He described a situation where attempting to complete a crucial academic project on the last night was disrupted by a negative experience stemming from familial discord. This finding underscored the academic implications of intimate encounters with family issues among individuals living with their families.

The motivation of students who chose to live with their families in Ankara varied. Some participants were drawn to experience university life in Ankara because they perceived it as a city with a vibrant student population. Others opted for this arrangement to provide support to the family member they were living with, especially in cases where their parents were divorced. They wished to avoid leaving the individual alone. Similarly, some participants expressed a desire to remain close to family members such as grandparents who cared for them since childhood. Thus, they chose to study in Ankara to avoid being separated from them.

In university settings, the participants who lived with their families often found themselves torn between seeking support and wanting independence. These students tended to believe that having their family's assistance makes problem-solving easier. The comfort of knowing that their family was there to support them provided a sense of security. This support could range from financial help to emotional backing and practical advice. However, there was another side to this dynamic. Despite the benefits of familial support, these students sometimes craved the opportunity to handle problems on their own. The desire for independence was a natural part of growing up and becoming self-sufficient. Yet, when families became overly involved, it could lead to feelings of frustration and discomfort for the participants. The constant interference from family members, even if well-intentioned, could prevent students from experiencing the necessary challenges.

Personal development. Some participants emphasized the profound impact of university life on various layers of their personal development. They highlighted the crucial role that university played in revealing and shaping their identity. The

university experience contributed significantly to character development. It supported students in becoming more mature and self-aware individuals. One key aspect of character development noted by the participants was the enhanced ability to solve problems. As they navigated university life, students encountered and tackled various challenges. These challenges helped them develop robust problem-solving skills. Over time, they perceived problems as less daunting. They felt a sense of maturity and capability in handling them. This growing competence and resilience were fundamental to their overall character growth.

Moreover, university life played a pivotal role in building self-confidence. The participants living apart from their families viewed their time at university as a critical phase where they transitioned into adulthood. This period was marked by significant personal growth and maturity. In essence, the university experience was seen as a preparatory stage that equips students with the necessary skills and confidence to step into adulthood. It served as a transformative period that fostered personal growth and enhanced problem-solving abilities. For example, one participant stated that:

> I do not worry about whether they will rebuff me if I say something; I am more confident now. I have my own stance. If a guy approaches me and says something, I respond, I move on. I think I have matured socially in university. It made me more vibrant; I believe. For example, if someone applies a nice lipstick in the bathroom, I immediately ask, 'What's its number?' Now, I am not shy anymore – AYBU6 -

Dealing with stress. Most of the participants identified several significant sources of stress in their university lives, with exams, financial issues, and transportation difficulties being the primary stressors. One of the most intense stressors reported was exam-related stress, as participants worried about the consequences of failing their courses. They concerned about the potential need to drop out of university due to low grades. This stress was exacerbated when exams relied heavily on rote memorization, particularly when the questions are in English. Some participants underline that the question asked in English added another layer of difficulty for themselves as non-native speakers. Apart from academic pressures, financial issues significantly contributed to students' stress, with concerns about covering fundamental needs, managing living expenses, and ensuring financial stability. Additionally,

transportation problems, such as long commutes and unreliable public transport further added to their stress. For example, one participant stated that:

> Because it is in English, everything feels equally important to me during exams. Now, I am studying for specific things, but sometimes the instructors' moves are unpredictable; they can change tactics. Moreover, the idea of having traditional exams is daunting for me because I used to get very stressed about exams as a child. It was probably largely psychological because my parents are teachers. In our household, success was constantly equated with exam performance, not considered in terms of personal development. The perception was that the more successful you were in exams, the more successful you would be in life – AYBU8 -

Anxiety for the future. Participants were increasingly anxious about the possibility of encountering employment challenges in the foreseeable future. This concern stemmed from several factors, notably the rising number of university graduates and the continual expansion of university enrollment quotas. As more individuals attained higher education qualifications, the job market became increasingly saturated, intensifying competition for available positions. For example, one participant stated that:

> I prioritize academia because I want to succeed. Success, in my opinion, is the greatest weapon, both in profession and in personal achievement. It is crucial to excel, even if someone else in the same field has graduated; you should strive for better grades to stand out. You need to have a broader perspective. If you are in university, of course, have fun, but also focus on self-improvement, graduate, and establish yourself in your profession. That is why I sometimes get stressed about finding a job – AYBU6 -

In addition, some participants expressed concerns regarding favoritism in both private and public sector employment, as rumors and hearsay surrounding nepotism and preferential treatment raised apprehensions about fair recruitment practices. This apprehension stemmed from a perceived lack of transparency and accountability in the hiring process. They felt that some personal connections or affiliations might influence decisions over qualifications and merit. For example, two participants stated that:

> Since we are junior students, some job anxiety and future anxiety started towards graduation. After all, there are too many engineers. There are many engineering students in Türkiye. We need to improve ourselves in order to get a good job among them, which makes me very worried about the business life part for now – AYBU25 -

> Actually, I don't want to be a lawyer. I want to work in the public sector. Half of the department wants to be a lawyer. Law is no longer a field with a lot of employment. There are too many lawyers. You need to improve yourself a lot....People who are on the jury in the judgeship prosecution interviews actually say that it is not like that, but we hear around us or something like that, those who make a degree in Türkiye in the judgeship prosecution exams cannot be appointed to the public sector because the academic of another university is on the jury, blah blah blah. Actually, there should be a rule like this. When you enter a certain ranking range, you should be appointed without an interview. But of course, there are such things like not being appointed, but our professors say that it will not be too much trouble for us. I don't know, I don't know, it seems like every professional group has such problems in Türkiye – AYBU28 -

Psychological wellbeing. Some participants noted that during their high school years, they enjoyed the comfort and ease of social interactions within a familiar environment. They underlined high schools were surrounded by close friends and acquaintances. However, transitioning to university, they initially struggled with the new social dynamics. The unfamiliar setting of university life presented challenges in terms of social interactions. It caused discomfort and hesitation when it came to engaging with strangers.

Many participants reported feeling uneasy about initiating conversations and interacting with unfamiliar people. This reluctance to communicate with others outside their known circle made it difficult for them to establish new connections. The fear of speaking with strangers and the hesitancy to reach out to new people often resulted in feelings of loneliness during the early stages of their university experience. This sense of isolation was particularly pronounced at the beginning of their university journey, then overcame this challenge. That means, the initial phase of university life was marked by a struggle to adapt to new social surroundings. It led to hesitation in communicating with strangers and a subsequent feeling of loneliness. This experience highlighted the significant shift from the close-knit social structure of high school to the broader university environment.

Some participants also reported that the friendships they formed at the beginning of their university life often proved to be unsustainable. Many students found that these initial relationships, established in an effort to quickly adapt to the new environment, were not well-suited to their personal values and long-term compatibility.

Consequently, they often characterized these friendships as misguided attempts at social integration. For example, one participant stated that:

> At the beginning I had the potential to open myself up a lot even with people I didn't know very well. I could tell my whole life story, I don't even want to think about what the feedback has been. Last year I experienced some bad things in terms of friends. There are some friends I don't talk to now. I think about whether I will experience similar things again, I get stressed – AYBU10 -

On the other hand, some participants from smaller towns reported feeling a sense of worthlessness during the initial stages of their university experience. In high school, these students were often recognized for their academic achievements and enjoyed special attention from their teachers. It made them feel valued and important. They expressed great satisfaction with the personalized attention and praise they received from their high school teachers. However, the transition to university life brought a stark contrast. The disappearance of this special attention in the larger and more impersonal university environment led to feelings of insignificance. While they were once considered standout students in their high schools, in university they found themselves to be just like everyone else. This shift in status was disconcerting and unfamiliar, making them feel undervalued. Accustomed to being constantly praised and singled out for their achievements, these students struggled with the lack of recognition in the university setting. The high school environment, where they were often the "star" students, sharply contrasted with the university environment. This change in their perceived importance led to feelings of inadequacy and a diminished sense of self-worth at the beginning of the university. For example, one participant stated that:

> I think people feel very unsuccessful at university because in high school we were always very valuable. We were the first in our small high schools. Everything was successful. Everything about us was worthy of praise. At university you are such a small point that you do not exist. You're so valuable to yourself. You're the center of the world. But everyone is the center of their own world. So being ignored, not being noticed, these are the things that are hit in the face when we come to university, especially those of us who come from small cities. As I said, I was very valuable in my small high school, but when I came to university and realized that everyone was like me, I felt very floundering here. I felt very worthless. Will I be valuable for someone? Will I be valuable for someone, for a group of friends? Will I be valuable in the courses of the professors? I first experienced that feeling of worthlessness at

> university. It was such a new feeling. It was also a bit difficult to get used to that new feeling – AYBU24 -

Additionally, two participants from the Department of Architecture reported experiencing feelings of doubt and regret when they saw the university lives of friends from other departments or different universities on social media. Observing their peers enjoying a more balanced lifestyle, participating in social activities, and seemingly having more free time made these students question whether they were missing out on important life experiences. This constant comparison exacerbated their stress. It led to a sense of dissatisfaction with their own university experience. For example, one of these participants stated that:

> In terms of my social life, for instance, yesterday I saw a story on Instagram where my friends went somewhere with a Halloween theme. They are mechanics and electricians, but there I was last night jokingly drawing my project. Social activities for me usually involve going out with friends once a month, maybe. But if I go out on a Sunday, it means I will be up all night on Sunday – AYBU 10 -

4.1.4.1.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of social engagement, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) campus life, (II) inactive student clubs, and (III) differences in student relationships and communication.

4.1.4.1.4.1. Campus Life

In terms of campus life, the findings of AYBU case can be divided into four parts named as (i) inadequacy of physical structures of campuses, (ii) limited social opportunities of campus, (iii) satisfaction with campus security and (iv) transportation challenges to campus.

Inadequacy of physical structures of campuses. In this study, participants were interviewed from two campuses of AYBU. One of these campuses was the Esenboğa Campus, located near the Çubuk district, which served as the main campus of the university. The other was the Milli İrade Campus, situated in the center of Ankara, in the Etlik district. The participants from these two campuses expressed differing opinions regarding the physical structure of their respective campuses.

The Esenboğa Campus of AYBU was located in a very remote area far from the city center. There was with no surrounding residential or commercial zones. It was situated near the Ankara Esenboğa Airport, but apart from that, the campus was described as being in the middle of a barren steppe. All of the participants characterized this campus as a university established in the midst of a desolate landscape. The participants expressed that the lack of any surrounding activity or facilities contributed to a sense of isolation. The campus environment, devoid of any nearby amenities or vibrant community life, led participants to describe it as a "deprivation zone". The absence of social and commercial infrastructure around the campus resulted in a significant feeling of remoteness and detachment from the urban lifestyle. The participants anticipated the need for the campus to be greener and more expected the creation of open spaces where they could spend more time outdoors.

On the other hand, it was observed that the buildings on the Esenboğa Campus were entirely identical in designs. Buildings with turquoise-colored details on a grey background were present. While some participants remained indifferent when it comes to the buildings, some particularly felt a sense of Turkish and Islamic architectural elements. They associated this especially with the dominant use of turquoise color. In fact, two participants from the Faculty of Architecture mentioned feeling as if they were wandering in Samarkand while strolling on the campus. In fact, a finding supporting participants' perceptions was evident on the university's website. The campus was referred as “Esenboğa Külliyesi” instead of “Esenboğa Campus” on the university website. The term of “külliye” means Islamic-Ottoman social complex.

When looked at Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus, the participants perceived its location as advantageous due to its proximity to the city center. Right next to the campus, there was a large shopping center. The participants remarked that the campus was very small and expressed the opinion that excessive construction was not suitable for its layout. The buildings also had floors underground. University cafeteria and laboratories were constructed in these underground floors. The architecture of the buildings on the campus was entirely the same as the buildings on the Esenboğa Campus.

Limited social opportunities of campuses. The Participants at the Esenboğa Campus noted that the limited liveliness of the living area continues within the campus in terms

of vibrancy. They mentioned the presence of a university cafeteria on the campus. Additionally, they indicated the existence of a restaurant and cafe with a history of only two years. Faculty cafeterias and a stationery store are also located within the campus. In addition to these, it was expressed that although there were fields within the campus such as basketball, football, or volleyball courts, they were not heavily utilized by students. It appeared that due to the campus's considerable distance from the city center, students tended not to spend much time within the campus premises. Upon the completion of their classes during the day, students were observed to leave the campus. Most of the participants noted that if they had free time between classes, they either engaged in conversations with friends or did activities like reading books or listening to music. In addition, despite the presence of the Youth Center office affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports within the Esenboğa Campus, none of the participants mentioned it.

In fact, at Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus, there was only one cafeteria and a single cafe within the campus premises. Despite the small size of the campus, the participants mentioned that due to the continuously increasing university population, this cafe was beginning to become inadequate. However, the livelier atmosphere of the surrounding area, the opportunity to meet various needs, and the presence of a shopping center allowed social activities to shift to the spaces immediately adjacent to the campus. Students expressed their willingness to spend time in these places, even if their breaks between classes were short.

The participants reported the occurrence of spring festivals at AYBU and expressed considerable satisfaction with it. However, they anticipated a livelier atmosphere during these celebrations. They perceived the spring festivities as lacking the desired spontaneous energy, as if they were organized solely for the sake of being held rather than emanating genuine enthusiasm. This sentiment arose from resembling orchestrated activities rather than genuine expressions of spring festivals. Furthermore, their disappointment was compounded by the absence of the artists they wished to see at these events. For example, one participant stated that:

> We used to have a spring festival. I think they could have made bigger organizations for those spring festivals like other universities. I don't know how much they can turn this place into a campus area since the area of the university

is already certain, but they can offer better environments for events – AYBU25 -

Satisfaction with campus security. The participants at the Esenboğa Campus were not facing security concerns due to the presence of dual checkpoints at the university entrance. Moreover, considering the campus's remote location outside the city center, they were not apprehensive about the possibility of unauthorized individuals entering the deserted area. The presence of some dogs within the campus premises added to the unease, particularly for those staying late into the evening on campus. However, the installation of security buttons at various locations across the university campus helped to feel secure. These buttons were pressed in case of discomfort or alarming situations, prompting immediate response from security personnel. Similarly, when looked at Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus, there were no security concerns among the participants.

Transportation challenges to campus. All Esenboğa participants, except for three residing at the KYK dormitory in Çubuk, underscored the issue of transportation challenges from the center of Ankara. Given that the majority of students lived in central Ankara, the current bus services were deemed insufficient. Participants noted that only two bus routes which numbered ad 474 and 486 serviced the campus. One of them operated as an express service, taking approximately 40-45 minutes, whereas the other one required around 1,5 hours to reach the campus. The limited frequency of these bus services and their overcrowded conditions are perceived as major barriers to student transportation. Some participants emphasized that living on the opposite side of Ankara required them to make multiple transfers to reach the campus. Considering that buses were often overcrowded, they had to leave their homes or dormitories well before their class times. They specifically noted that for morning classes, they were forced to wake up extremely early to ensure timely arrival.

The participant reported that they constantly had to wait in long lines for the bus. Even when they managed to board, the journey was extremely crowded. Due to these conditions, some participants expressed a reluctance to come to the campus at all. Some participants even mentioned that during the pandemic, when classes shifted to online teaching, they were relieved because it eliminated the transportation problems. In fact, one participant from the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation mentioned that she chose their program based on the assumption that it was located at

the Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus, which was close to her home. However, after enrolling, she was shocked to learn that their department was actually located at the Esenboğa Campus.

This transportation issue could even impact their academic activities. For example, the participants from the Faculty of Architecture highlighted that the overcrowded public transportation made it nearly impossible to bring their project models to campus if they completed them at home. They expressed concerns that in such crowded conditions, their models were likely to get damaged. Another example was the participant from the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation who attended theoretical classes at the Esenboğa Campus, while taking laboratory classes at the Bilkent Campus. They mentioned that sometimes both theoretical and laboratory classes were scheduled on the same day. These days became chaotic for them. The approximately 40 km distance between the campuses, coupled with the temporal traffic congestions due to Ankara's metropolitan status, made transportation challenging for them. The students found themselves rushing between the two campuses to attend classes on the same day.

On the other hand, the participants residing in the KYK dormitory near the Esenboğa Campus in Çubuk reported being in a better situation compared to their peers coming from Ankara city center. They mentioned that they could reach the campus using various minibuses or by hitchhiking. This relatively easier access alleviated some of the transportation challenges faced by students commuting from farther away.

Many participants noted the proximity of the Esenboğa Campus to Ankara Esenboğa Airport and expressed frustration over the repeated delays in the fulfillment of local and central government promises to build a metro line. Especially senior students complained that they heard these promises since they first enrolled at the university, yet no concrete steps were taken. They emphasized that if the airport metro line was constructed, it was expected to include a stop at the AYBU Esenboğa Campus, significantly improving transportation accessibility.

When looked at Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus being located in the city center of Ankara, it allowed students to easily access it without any transportation issues. There does not seem to be a problem regarding transportation. The biggest concern of the participants

at this campus was the argument that all campuses would be consolidated into one single campus at Esenboğa. They did not want this situation, as they anticipated transportation difficulties. At least until they graduated, they hoped that this consolidation did not happen.

On the other hand, both campus participants emphasized the presence of an economically supportive municipal service for transportation for years. They appreciated the student season ticket system (öğrenci abonman bilet sistemi). With this season ticket system, they could use public transportation unlimitedly for one month for a certain fee. They underlined that this system was cheaper than buying individual tickets.

4.1.4.1.4.2. Inactive Student Clubs

Some participants noted the active engagement of several student clubs within the campus premises. Particularly, it was highlighted that certain student clubs were more visibly active. For instance, the Dodo student club theatre, which attended to the care, vaccination, and feeding of animals on the Esenboğa Campus, was highly appreciated by many participants. They emphasized that the attention given to animals minimized the incidence of dog attacks within the campus.

The students who wre eager to join university student clubs often found themselves drawn to vibrant clubs in various fields, as evidenced by the accounts of active participants. These clubs offered a plethora of opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities, broaden their horizons, and forge meaningful connections with like-minded peers.

> The clubs of the university are very nice, I already participate in clubs as much as I can. I press every button, the more the better. Especially in theater and photography clubs, I participate in them, whether it is trips or events. Theater movie times are organized, we go to the campus and watch the movie. The photography club had a trip to Bolu last year. Apart from the excursion clubs, our professors are organizing a lot of excursions now…. If we look at it, it has not approach the standards of Middle East Technical University or Hacettepe University. We are still at the beginning of this, there are problems with this. Obviously not everything is settled. We attribute this to the fact that it is a bit new, but we manage – AYBU12 -

However, it was observed that the majority of participant limited experience in actively engaging with these student clubs. This limited involvement could be attributed to various factors. Firstly, the geographical distance of the main campus from the city center posed a significant barrier. Many students, upon completing their classes, opted to leave the campus promptly to commute back home or to other parts of the city. Consequently, this rush to depart hindered their ability to partake in community activities or initiatives. Moreover, the timing of these community activities might not align with students' schedules. Given the demanding nature of academic commitments and extracurricular activities, students might find it challenging to allocate time for participating in community endeavors.

Active participants in student clubs were observed to develop their leadership skills, establish collaborations with stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, and build networks. They also experienced improvements in their communication skills, including understanding key points to consider when speaking verbally in communication with university administration, and realizing how to choose appropriate attire for formal meetings.

For example, one participant took active administrative role under a student club for organization of spring festival. Serving in a leadership role within a student club during the university's spring festival preparation noted to significantly enhance his leadership skills. Additionally, it facilitated collaborations with stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. Moreover, it fostered the development of networking capabilities within student club. Through this engagement, this participant mentioned the improvement in communication abilities, particularly in understanding the nuances of verbal communication with university administration, discerning key considerations for effective communication in formal meetings, and gaining awareness of appropriate attire choices for such occasions. These findings underscored the experiential learning opportunities within student clubs. These types of experiences not only contributed to personal growth but also equipped participants with practical skills essential for navigating professional environments beyond the university setting.

4.1.4.1.4.3. Differences in Student Relationships and Communication

Some participants reported perceiving themselves as more reserved before attending university. However, upon experiencing the ability to engage in conversations with individuals they had never met before, since arriving at university, even introverted individuals found themselves speaking and expressing in front of groups with greater ease. This suggested a notable shift in their comfort level and communication skills. It potentially attributed to the diverse social interactions and opportunities for self-expression encountered within the university environment.

On the other hand, some participants emphasized making incorrect friend choices, particularly in the initial stages. They noted that prior to their university experience, they tended to assume that others shared similar thoughts and believed in the inherent goodwill of everyone. However, upon experiencing the reality, they observed the prominence of transactional relationships. It highlighted disparities in maturity levels and the emergence of behaviors perceived as childish. This underscored the importance of discernment in interpersonal relationships and the learning curve associated with navigating social dynamics within the university context. In addition, some participants were observed to engage in a constant academic competition with one another throughout their university experience. This competition manifested in various forms including striving to attain higher grades, achieving superior grade point averages, outperforming peers in professional endeavors, and seeking to facilitate easier job placement through academic excellence.

Some participants noted a departure from their high school experience, where they primarily interacted with peers of similar age groups, to encountering students of varying age ranges within their university departments. Specifically, they mentioned the presence of non-traditional students, such as those who were older than themselves, returning to pursue education for personal development, career change, or completing a second degree.

4.1.4.1.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

Under the category of financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, three sub-themes are obtained. These three sub-themes are called (I) financial challenges and budget

management, (II) challenging accommodation conditions, and (III) differences in nutrition opportunities.

Financial challenges and budget management. Most of participants highlighted the economic difficulties of attending university during a period of severe financial hardship. They reported that the challenge of managing living expenses and controlling their budgets caused significant stress. Many participants noted that they faced initial difficulties because budget control had previously been managed by their families before attending university. The worsening economic conditions e made it increasingly difficult to adapt to the existing circumstances with a fixed budget. That means, participants highlighted their struggle to learn effective budget management due to the constant fluctuation of prices. They indicated that if prices were more stable, they might be better able to learn and implement effective budget management skills. However, they felt relatively better when talking to their friends studying in İstanbul, as they perceived Ankara to be more affordable economically than İstanbul.

The participants specifically mentioned that students staying in KYK dormitories reported that a large portion of their loans went towards dormitory fees, leaving them with a very limited budget. They stated that they relied on their families' financial support to sustain their university life. Moreover, they noted that this financial support from their families increased each month due to rising prices. Some participants mentioned working as waiters, busboys, or sales assistants in clothing stores to reduce the financial burden on their families. In fact, some participants reported being in such dire financial situations that some of their peers begun to take an interest in cryptocurrency and stock markets, hoping to potentially grow their very limited budgets. This trend reflected a desperate search for opportunities to improve their financial stability to meet their basic living expenses.

For participants living in student homes, the burden of apartment fees, electricity bills, water bills, and natural gas bills became so overwhelming that it forced them to cut back on essential needs, particularly food. Some students reported that due to financial constraints, they skipped dinner at home to save money after having lunch at the university. Instead, they resorted to purchasing and consuming inexpensive items like pasta and rice.

The participants living with their families did not typically worry about basic necessities and household bills. Living with family often means that students' basic needs such as housing, food, and utilities were taken care of. However, once they stepped outside their homes, they felt significantly restricted, especially regarding their daily expenses. One participant reported that after buying a coffee from the campus canteen one day, he felt as though he could not afford to buy another coffee the next day.

Challenging accommodation conditions. Among the participants, some students resided in KYK dormitories closer to Çubuk, while others lived in KYK dormitories in the center of Ankara. The participants noted that besides students from the Esenboğa Campus, there were also students from other public universities in Ankara staying at the KYK dormitories near Çubuk. They complained about the distance of the Esenboğa Campus from the city center, and similarly, the students of other public universities staying at the KYK dormitory in Çubuk complained about the distance of their own university campuses from where they resided. These students were reported having to wake up very early to catch their classes and mentioned constant bus queues in front of the KYK dormitory in Çubuk. Additionally, it was observed that students staying at the Çubuk KYK dormitory were limited in benefiting from Ankara's social opportunities due to the distance.

These participants reported that the KYK dormitories were very crowded, with some rooms accommodating up to eight people. The crowded rooms in the KYK dormitories evoke a sense of being in a camp reminiscent of military barracks. The students who attended boarding schools during their high school years seemed to adapt more quickly to dormitory life, being more familiar with communal living. However, the participants experiencing dormitory life for the first time at university, especially those living with people they had never met before, found it particularly challenging initially.

For many of these students, the transition to university life marked their first time living away from their families and sharing a space with strangers. This adjustment period was often difficult, primarily because of the crowded conditions in the dormitories. Sharing a room with other individuals mean a significant reduction in

personal space and privacy. The lack of personal space was especially hard for those who needed solitude to study, relax, or simply have some time alone. The constant presence of others made it challenging to find a quiet corner or a moment of privacy. This situation led to feelings of frustration and a sense of their personal lives being restricted.

However, after some time, students who initially struggled to adjust to their roommates in the dormitory found a sense of camaraderie. Despite initial complaints about the dorm's physical conditions, they grew accustomed to living together. They not only helped each other out but also formed close bonds, considering their roommates as friends. They even shared the food packages sent by their families from out of town.

In KYK dormitories, there are complaints regarding various issues such as technical malfunctions, non-functional electrical outlets, leaks in the bathrooms, and problems with room doors continuously being left open or having difficulty closing properly. One criticism was that there was a service called spiritual counseling in the KYK dormitories. The participants interpreting from its name noted that it might be approached the issues more spiritually. However, they emphasized that this service should be provided by psychologists or psychological counselors. For example, two participants stated that:

> Dormitory facilities are inadequate in some ways. How can I put it, there are too many technical malfunctions. The dormitory where I stay is newly built and this is only the second year. Despite this, there are too many technical malfunctions. In terms of facilities, if we do not go directly to the administration, the problems are not solved very quickly. There are many extra problems such as water leakage in the shower and toilet, problems with the door, problems with the windows – AYBU9 –

> It seems like there is a spiritual counselor in the dorms for psychological support. I study theology, but personally, I do not think there should be such a thing as a spiritual counselor. The person dealing with these matters should have a background in psychology. If someone else were to come and talk about their problems, as a theology graduate, I would try to help, but can I be as helpful as someone with a psychology background? There should definitely be someone who has studied psychology – AYBU4 -

It was observed that students who preferred to stay in student homes often chose to share houses with close friends from their departments, or with friends of those friends who may be studying in other departments, or even with relatives living in Ankara.

They formed these living arrangements in a manner akin to a snowball effect, gradually expanding their social circles. They also noted that in the home environment, everyone had their own personal space, as well as shared communal areas. have mentioned that overall, everyone generally followed the rules of the house, but there were occasional lapses which they tolerated. On the other hand, the participants who stayed in family homes reported that their accommodation routines continued as usual like high school. They mentioned having their own rooms at home and emphasized that they had a private space when they wanted to be alone.

Differences in nutrition opportunities. The participants from both Esenboğa and Milli İrade (Etlik) campuses generally expressed satisfaction with the university's cafeteria services. They particularly emphasized that, given the price fluctuations in the external market, the cost-performance ratio of the meals provided was considered to be excellent. In recent times, there was a noticeable increase in food and beverage prices in external restaurants and cafeterias. These increases were largely driven by fluctuations in food costs and broader economic conditions. Within this context, the prices at the university cafeteria were perceived as very reasonable compared to similar services outside the campus. The participants noted that these prices fit well within their budgets, and the quality and variety of the meals provided meet their expectations. One critique made by one participant concerned the separation of university cafeteria for faculty members and students. This participant felt that eating in different locations fostered a sense of inequality. He believed that sharing common dining areas would promote a greater sense of unity. He expressed it with these sentences:

> I think students and faculty members should not eat in different places. We are a civilized country. I think there are no such distinctions in a civilized country. The administrator and the employee eat in the same place, but students and faculty members eat in different places here. I think this should not happen. Because this also improves the student-instructor relationship. I am the teacher, you are the student, it makes you forget that status. I think the status quo is a bad thing. Aristocracy is bad – AYBU11 -

Regarding the dining and beverage facilities on campus, the Esenboğa Campus featured one restaurant and one cafe, both with a two-year history, in addition to canteen services in some faculties. In contrast, the Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus had only one cafe. The participants found these nutrition facilities to be limited and insufficient.

The Milli İrade Campus, being situated within the city center and adjacent to a shopping mall, could mitigate these limitations through its surrounding amenities. However, the Esenboğa Campus, located in a more isolated area, remained constrained in terms of nutrition options due to its remote setting.

When examining nutrition options available in KYK dormitories, it was evident that participants were generally dissatisfied with the meals provided. They often found the food to be bland and lacking in taste. However, due to their financial circumstances, many students felt compelled to rely on these meals despite their dissatisfaction. The quality, taste and portion of the food in KYK dormitories were a significant point of concern for the participants. Despite these negative perceptions, the economic realities faced by many students made it difficult for them to seek alternative food options. The affordability of the meals provided in the dormitories was a crucial factor, as many students were on tight budgets and could not afford to regularly dine elsewhere. As a result, they continued to consume the dormitory meals.

It was observed that the participants living with their families generally maintained their dietary routines at home. As a result, they believed they had a more balanced and healthy diet compared to their peers staying in dormitories. Among participants living in shared student housing, two distinct perspectives emerged. One group reported that they often resorted to eating snacks and junk food because they did not want to cook. The other group, constrained by financial limitations, tended to eat lunch at the university cafeteria and then either skipped dinner or consumed carbohydrate-heavy meals like rice and pasta in the evenings.

4.1.4.1.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

Under the category of university in terms of political engagement, two sub-themes are obtained. These two sub-themes are called (I) communication gaps between university students and university administration and (II) organization of university web-pages.

Communication gaps between university students and university administration. The participants reported that they shared their positive or negative experiences related to the university among themselves or conveyed them to faculty members through open communication channels. However, they noted that the pathways to reach the

university administration were limited. One participant illustrated this by comparing it to a high school setting, where the principal was always accessible and open to direct communication. He questioned why a similar approach was not adopted in universities. Independent of faculty and departmental administrations, he found the higher-level university administrators particularly inaccessible.

Another example involved a member of a student club responsible for organizing the spring festival. During the three-day spring festival organization, the selection of singers to perform on stage was brought up by them. They mentioned conducting a university-wide survey to determine the top three artists preferred by students and subsequently discussing these choices with the university administration. However, the university administration, for various reasons, declined to approve the three artists requested by the students. Instead, they opted for another artist who ranked last in the survey. According to the students organizing the event, the university administration did not even consider the survey results. The students also reported that the fee for the top three artists chosen in the survey was equivalent to the fee for the artist approved by the university administration. Despite the students' feedback that having three different artists performing on three different days would make the university festival livelier, the decision was finalized differently. This participant felt that during the decision-making process, students were disregarded, and various political influences were at play. The participant stated that he resigned from the administrative role within the student club due to such negative experiences. He emphasized that when requesting the completion of surveys, they as student club assured students that their opinions would be influential in the decision-making process. However, the disregard for the survey results shattered their motivation and made him felt responsible towards the students responding survey.

Some participants expressed a desire to see university administrators more frequently on campus and to have opportunities to engage in conversations and casual discussions with them. They believed that the presence of administrators in the daily campus environment would foster a stronger sense of community. This increased visibility and approachability would allow students to feel more connected to the decision-makers and more confident that their concerns and suggestions are being heard.

Organization of university web-pages. Some participants expressed discomfort regarding the usage of the university's official website and social media accounts. They noted a predominant focus on the national and international visits of university top management, meetings with various ministers, collaborations with powerful firms in the private sector. They perceived a page management style that prioritized these activities over student-centric content. While university administrators were highly visible on social media platforms, the previous practice of featuring students on web pages and including photos with the university management has disappeared. These participants found this shift concerning. For example, one participant stated that:

> Sharing behaviors and posts that would encourage students to come to university, it would be great if these photos were also shared on the university's website. When I look at university pages, I only see posts about the rector or events organized by the university itself; I cannot recall any posts specifically about students. Only during festival times do we see posts about students. It would be nice to have posts for students throughout the day. Our university already has a photographer; if they came and took photos for Instagram, students could take their photos there. Imagine if they took photos of the people sitting here, or students studying, and posted something like 'A day at our university.' Students would appreciate it; I know I would. During the festival, they shared our photos, and it felt really good. I thought, 'Our university shared us.' Other universities, their rectors, students, and academics see the posts of other universities, so these things should be done – AYBU7 –

4.1.4.2. Interpretative Findings of AYBU

In this section, for AYBU participants, the researcher's interpretations regarding the six fundamental categories of student engagement are included. Through a more interpretative approach, this analysis tries to delve into each category. It contributes to a comprehensive understanding of student engagement in AYBU.

4.1.4.2.1. Environment of University

The findings of the university environment data reveal several key factors impacting student engagement. Understanding these factors is crucial for fostering a more engaged and motivated student body.

Preparation for the profession. Students expect their university education to equip them with essential technical skills and practical experiences. *The availability of internships, hands-on projects, and rigorous academic training significantly enhances*

student engagement by preparing them for their future careers. When these expectations are met, students feel more invested in their studies, leading to higher levels of engagement.

Diversity and inclusion. A diverse and inclusive student body fosters a rich learning environment where various cultural, religious, and political perspectives are represented. Students who experience a diverse environment are more likely to be engaged, as they feel intellectually stimulated and socially connected.

University autonomy and freedom. Students seek an academic environment that offers greater autonomy and freedom of expression. *When universities support open dialogue and allow for the free exchange of ideas, students feel more empowered and engaged*. *Conversely, perceived ideological constraints can lead to disengagement, as students may feel their voices are not valued or heard.*

Educational quality and reputation. *The perceived quality and reputation of the university play a significant role in student engagement*. Students who feel that their institution provides high-quality education and has a strong reputation are more likely to be engaged. Comparisons with well-established universities highlight the need for AYBÜ to continually improve its educational offerings and build a robust institutional identity.

Social and cultural opportunities. *The social and cultural opportunities available in the surrounding environment significantly impact student engagement*. Ankara's vibrant cultural scene, with its theaters, museums, and public libraries, offers students numerous avenues for enrichment outside the classroom. *Access to these resources supports a well-rounded university experience, contributing to higher engagement levels*.

English-medium instruction. The provision of English-medium instruction is a crucial factor for many students, as it enhances their global competitiveness. *Students value the opportunity to develop their English proficiency, which boosts their academic and professional prospects*. This factor is integral to maintaining high levels of student engagement, as it aligns with their career aspirations.

Campus integration. The physical separation of campuses can hinder student engagement. Integrated campuses facilitate better social and academic interactions, fostering a sense of community. Reducing campus fragmentation and promoting a unified university environment are essential for enhancing student engagement.

Managing student quotas. The continuous increase in student quotas without corresponding resource expansion strains the university's infrastructure. It leads to overcrowded classes and limited facilities. *Properly managing student intake and ensuring adequate resources are crucial for maintaining a high quality of education and student engagement*.

In summary, to boost student engagement at AYBÜ, it is essential to focus on providing high-quality education, fostering diversity and inclusion, ensuring academic freedom, offering rich social and cultural opportunities, maintaining English-medium instruction, integrating campuses, and managing student quotas effectively. These measures will create a more engaging environment for students.

4.1.4.2.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

The analysis of the data reveals several key factors impacting academic engagement at AYBU. Understanding these factors, namely, academic staff, teaching quality, infrastructure and resources and academic culture is crucial for fostering a more engaged student body.

Academic staff. *The presence of academic staff with strong networks in both public and private sectors greatly enhances academic engagement.* These connections allow for practical insights and real-world experiences to be integrated into the curriculum. It makes learning more relevant and engaging. *However, the limited English proficiency of some faculty members hinders effective communication and understanding, thereby affecting student engagement negatively*.

Teaching quality. *Heavy teaching loads and the predominance of theoretical content over practical applications are significant challenges to academic engagement*. While some students appreciate the rigorous academic environment, others struggle with the lack of hands-on learning opportunities. Additionally, *the shift to online teaching*

during the pandemic highlights difficulties in maintaining engagement, with many students feeling disconnected and less motivated.

Infrastructure and resources. *The lack of well-equipped libraries and disparities in access to laboratory facilities across campuses can impede academic engagement*. Students at campuses with inadequate resources often have to seek alternatives, such as using public libraries or purchasing materials themselves. Reliable internet connectivity is also a crucial factor, as connectivity issues can disrupt learning and communication, further affecting engagement.

Academic culture. *Efforts to internationalize the curriculum by including diverse national and international sources are beneficial for academic engagement*. However, the university's reliance on a specific demographic of international students may limit cultural exchange and diversity. Additionally, the lack of comprehensive orientation activities and a clear communication system can leave students feeling unprepared and stresses. It highlights the need for structured support to enhance engagement.

In summary, improving English proficiency among faculty, balancing theoretical and practical content, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive academic culture are key to boosting academic engagement at the university.

4.1.4.2.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

The findings from the study reveal several important aspects of psychological engagement in AYBU context.

Individual autonomy and responsibility. *The transition to university life marked the first experience of independence for many students, contributing significantly to their psychological engagement.* Initially, the burden of managing personal affairs independently caused stress, but over time, it fostered resilience and self-reliance, enhancing their sense of empowerment and engagement.

Family dynamics. Family involvement had varied impacts on students' psychological well-being. Those living away from their families often felt homesick and stressed due to constant concern from their parents. On the other hand, those living with their

families experienced limited independence and family conflicts. These dynamics influenced their psychological engagement by affecting their emotional and mental states.

Personal development. University life was pivotal for personal growth, significantly impacting psychological engagement. The increased responsibilities and independence help students develop problem-solving skills and self-confidence. This period was seen as a transformative journey that prepared students for adulthood, enhancing their psychological engagement.

Coping with stress. Major stressors included academic pressures, financial concerns, and transportation issues. Exam-related stress heightened by language barriers was prevalent. *Financial instability of country and long commutes added to their anxiety. It affects their psychological engagement by creating a persistent sense of pressure*.

Future anxiety. *Concerns about future employment and job market competition significantly affected students' psychological engagement*. The fear of nepotism and favoritism in hiring practices further exacerbated their anxiety. It underscores the need for transparent employment practices to alleviate these concerns.

Psychological well-being. The transition from high school to university brought initial social challenges, leading to feelings of loneliness and discomfort. Over time, students adapted, but the early phase required significant psychological adjustment. The sense of value and recognition from high school often diminished. It impacts self-worth and psychological engagement to the university.

In summary, these findings underscore the complex nature of psychological engagement in university students, influenced by autonomy, family dynamics, personal development, stress management, future anxieties, and overall psychological wellbeing.

4.1.4.2.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

The findings highlight several key areas impacting university students' social engagement. These include campus life and physical infrastructure, inactive student clubs and student relationships and communication differences.

Campus life and physical infrastructure. The physical infrastructure of the campus significantly influences social engagement. At the remote Esenboğa Campus, isolation and lack of nearby facilities hinder social interaction, with students describing it as a "deprivation zone" and desiring more green spaces. Conversely, the centrally located Milli İrade (Etlik) Campus, despite its small size, offers better social engagement due to its proximity to amenities. *However, the separated campus setup limits interaction and weakens the sense of community*. It reduces both academic and social exchanges. *Thus, a unified and accessible campus environment is crucial for enhancing student engagement, as stimulating surroundings lead to higher engagement levels*.

Role of student clubs. Active student clubs and organizations significantly enhance social engagement by providing platforms for students. However, the overall limited participation in these clubs is often due to the geographical distance of the campus from the city center, which discourages students from staying on campus after classes. *This indicates that increased accessibility and better scheduling of club activities could enhance student engagement. High levels of club activity and accessibility directly correlate with increased student engagement*.

Student relationships and communication. Student relationships and communication also influence social engagement. Many students initially perceived themselves as introverted before attending university. *The challenge of making genuine connections and dealing with competitive academic environments sometimes hampers social engagement.* The presence of older or non-traditional students adds diversity to the social fabric of the university. It provides opportunities for varied social interactions, which can enhance engagement if managed well. Positive interpersonal relationships and inclusive communication practices elevate engagement levels among students.

In summary, enhancing social engagement at the university requires addressing physical infrastructure issues, increasing the visibility and accessibility of student clubs, and fostering diverse social interactions. When students feel connected through physical spaces, their social engagement levels are notably higher.

4.1.4.2.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

The findings highlight several factors impacting student engagement at the university, particularly in the areas of financial challenges, housing conditions, and nutrition.

Financial difficulties and budget management. Financial stress significantly affects student engagement. Many students struggle to manage living expenses and budgets, leading to high levels of stress. *The fluctuating economic conditions make it difficult for students to effectively manage their budgets. It reduces their ability to focus on academic and social activities.* This financial strain often necessitates part-time work, further detracting from their engagement in university life.

Challenging accommodation conditions. Housing conditions also play a critical role in student engagement. Students in overcrowded KYK dormitories face significant challenges in adapting to shared living spaces. The lack of personal space and privacy can be particularly stressful, impacting their ability to study and relax. Over time, however, some students manage to build a sense of camaraderie with their roommates, which can enhance their social engagement. *Those who live in student apartments or with family generally report better living conditions, which support higher engagement levels due to fewer distractions and more stable living environments*.

Differences in nutritional opportunities. Nutritional opportunities vary greatly and impact student engagement differently. *Students generally appreciate the cost-performance ratio of university canteens but find the food in KYK dormitories to be unsatisfactory*. Limited and unappetizing food options can lead to poor nutrition, affecting students' health and energy levels. Those who live with family or in shared apartments with better cooking facilities tend to have more balanced diets.

In summary, financial constraints, challenging living conditions, and limited nutritional options significantly hinder student engagement.

4.1.4.2.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

The findings highlight several factors impacting political engagement at the university, particularly in the areas of aommunication gaps between students and administration as well as representation on university platforms.

Communication gaps between students and university administration. Significant communication gaps between university students and the administration impact political engagement. *While students share experiences among themselves and with faculty, they find it challenging to communicate with top management, perceived as*

inaccessible. This inaccessibility reduces willingness to participate in university affairs, lowering overall engagement.

Representation on university platforms. The university's official website and social media prioritize administrative activities over student-centered content. This focus on meetings with officials and partnerships overshadows student achievements and experiences. *The lack of student representation online creates a sense of disconnection and marginalization, further hindering political engagement*. Enhancing student visibility on these platforms could foster a greater sense of community and belonging, thereby boosting political engagement levels.

In summary, improving communication channels between students and university administration, along with a balanced representation of student life in official media, can significantly enhance student engagement. When students feel heard and valued, their engagement to the university environment are likely to increase.

4.2. Cross-Case Findings

Cross-case findings for the four cases in this section are shown after the within-case results for each higher education institution. According to Merriam (2009), the level of cross-case analysis can provide typologies or categories that comprehend data from all cases to create a substantial and integrated framework spanning many cases, rather than just a uniform description of all cases.

In this study, cross-case findings are presented in two distinct ways. In the first part, the collected data are transformed into descriptive findings. In the second part, the researcher provides an interpretation of the data and observations, offering an analytical perspective on the findings.

4.2.1. Descriptive Cross-Case Findings

Descriptive cross-case results are presented under six sections. These sections are called (1) environment of university, (2) university in terms of academic engagement, (3) university in terms of psychological engagement, (4) university in terms of social engagement, (5) experiences in terms of financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, and (6) university in terms of political engagement.

Table 15 below summarizes the cross-case findings from the four Turkish universities established after 2000s. The similarities and differences are highlighted using qualitative codes to provide a holistic understanding.

Table 15. *Summary of cross-case findings*

Category	Sub-themes	RTEU	ADYU	UU	AYBU
ENVIRONMENT OF UNIVERSITY	Expectation of rich social environment before university	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Social limitations of the city	✓	✓	✓	
	Unfavorable geographical conditions	✓			
	Continuous increase in student quotas			✓	✓
	Ideologically coded identity	✓			✓
	Conservative approaches and attitudes	✓	✓	✓	
	Impact of religious cults		✓		
	Limited experiences in targeted program for studying	✓	✓	✓	✓
ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT	Ineffectiveness of online teaching	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Limitations of technological infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Lack of internationalization efforts	✓	✓	✓	
	Challenges of English-medium teaching due to lack of language proficiency				✓
	Loss of talented academics	✓	✓		
	Incompatibility of academic specializations and given courses	✓	✓		

	Intensive course load	✓	✓		✓
	Lack of different evaluation mechanisms	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Use of limited teaching techniques	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Inadequate physical structure of classrooms and faculty buildings	✓	✓	✓	
	Inadequacy of laboratory materials and equipment		✓	✓	✓
PSYCHOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT	Differences in individual autonomy and responsibilities	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Varied influences of family dynamics	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Stress due to exams and financial constraints	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Emotional breakdown	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Future anxiety		✓	✓	✓
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	Limited social opportunities of campus	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Organizing events with limited themes and inviting similar guest speakers	✓			✓
	Satisfaction with campus security	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Transportation challenges to campus	✓		✓	✓
	Inactive student clubs	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Challenges in peer interaction and student-faculty interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓

FINANCIAL ISSUES, ACCOMODATION AND NUTRITION	Financial challenges	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Challenging accommodation conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Differences in nutrition opportunities between university and dormitory cafeterias	✓	✓	✓	✓
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT	Lack of student voice in university decisions	✓	✓		
	Limited interaction between students and university administration			✓	✓
	Bureaucratic challenges	✓			
	Dominance of university administrators in virtual faces of university		✓	✓	✓
	Need for collaboration between university administration and university administration	✓			

4.2.1.1. Environment of University

The environment of university can be categorized as (I) factors affecting university and department preferences, (II) preparation for the profession, (III) rich social environment, and (IV) expecting more diversity in student profile, (V) social and academic opportunity gap between smaller and larger cities, (VI) impact of ideology and religious approaches, (VII) different economic viability of cities, (VIII) newly-establishment status of universities and (IX) perceived as representative of some ideological views.

Factors affecting university and department preferences. In the context of Türkiye, several key factors influence students' choices of university and field of study. Notably, their rankings in the centralized university entrance exam play a crucial role. Concerns about employment prospects drive students towards certain disciplines, while family pressure also significantly affects their decisions. Additionally, some

undergraduate programs are chosen as stepping stones for careers such as teachers and polices.

In Türkiye, the pivotal role of the university entrance exam in determining students' access to higher education could not be overlooked. This exam which served as the gateway to university admission heavily influenced participants' choices. That means the central university entrance exam results often shaped their academic paths more significantly than their personal desires and aspirations. The scores achieved in this centralized exam, particularly the national rankings, effectively delineated the boundaries of students' options, constraining their ability to select institutions and programs based solely on interest.

As a result, students' preferences were frequently subordinated to their exam performance, with higher-ranking students gaining entry to more prestigious universities and coveted programs. This phenomenon underscored a meritocratic yet restrictive system where academic success in a single, high-stakes examination could dictate future educational and career trajectories. Consequently, the university entrance exam became a critical determinant of socio-economic mobility, as well as an influential factor in shaping the academic and professional landscapes in Türkiye. The pressures associated with this exam also highlighted broader issues related to educational equity and access, as students from diverse backgrounds navigated a competitive environment that placed significant weight on standardized test performance.

Even among those who achieved rankings in the university entrance exam sufficient to enter their targeted universities and programs, some significant barriers persisted. Firstly, economic instability of Türkiye often forced students to reconsider their options. Many opted to study closer to home to alleviate the financial burden associated with living in another city. This tendency highlighted the influence of economic factors on educational decisions, where financial constraints could limit access to potentially more suitable or prestigious programs. Additionally, there was a marked trend among students to choose fields with high employment potential, such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and special education. This pragmatic approach reflected a strategic alignment with labor market demands, often at the expense of

personal interests and passions. The preference for these professions was frequently driven by the desire to secure stable employment post-graduation. It illustrated a critical intersection between educational aspirations and economic pragmatism. Consequently, the decision-making process for many students was heavily influenced by both immediate economic considerations and long-term employment prospects. It revealed a complex interplay of factors beyond mere academic achievement. This multifaceted dynamic points to broader systemic issues within the higher education landscape in Türkiye, where economic and employment concerns significantly shaped educational pathways and outcomes.

Secondly, in addition to economic constraints and employment prospects, family expectations and pressures played a significant role in shaping students' higher education choices in Türkiye. Many participants reported that despite their personal interests and aspirations, they faced substantial familial pressure to choose fields perceived as more secure and prestigious in terms of employment potential. This was particularly evident in the strong familial preference for programs in health sciences, engineering, and law. Parents often steered their children towards these disciplines, believing they offer better job stability and financial security. Thus, the decision-making process was not solely a reflection of individual aspirations. It was heavily mediated by the socio-economic and cultural context, including significant input from family members. This phenomenon underscored the complex interplay of personal, familial, and societal factors in the higher education choices of Turkish students.

Thirdly, students who did not achieve the rankings necessary to enter their targeted programs often faced considerable pressure to obtain a university degree, regardless of the field of study. This societal expectation to be a university graduate compelled many students to enroll in undergraduate programs without a clear purpose or passion for the subject matter. They frequently expressed a lack of interest in their chosen fields and acknowledged the limited employment prospects in these fields. For these students, obtaining a degree became a strategic step toward other career opportunities, such as becoming teachers, police officers, or salaried soldiers in the public sector. They viewed undergraduate programs as stepping stones, utilizing the degree to meet prerequisites for further qualifications, such as pedagogical formation certificate for teaching or passing specific exams and interviews required for police or military

positions. This approach raised questions about the alignment of university education with its intended purpose. The pursuit of a degree under these circumstances highlighted a disconnect between students' academic experiences and their professional goals. It revealed broader issues within the higher education system. This phenomenon underscored the tension between societal pressures for higher education credentials and the intrinsic educational mission of universities. This finding suggested a need for a reevaluation of the role and objectives of university education in Türkiye.

Preparation for the profession. The perception of universities as institutions primarily geared towards professional development significantly influenced students' motivations for pursuing higher education. This perspective was rooted in the belief that obtaining a university degree was crucial for maintaining or enhancing one's socio-economic status. *As such, many students viewed their time at university as an investment in their future careers, prioritizing professional growth over other aspects of personal development.*

This phenomenon was reflected in the increasing emphasis on career-oriented programs and the growing demand for fields of study that promised high employability and financial returns. Consequently, the role of universities was often seen as pivotal stepping stone to economic advancement. This shift in perception also underscored the pressure on universities to align their curricula with market needs, ensuring that graduates possess the skills and knowledge required by employers. Moreover, this trend highlighted the broader socio-economic expectations placed on higher education institutions to serve as engines of economic mobility and stability. As universities continued to adapt to these expectations, the balance between fostering a well-rounded education and meeting the immediate professional aspirations of students became an increasingly complex challenge.

Rich social environment. Participants often reflected on their pre-university education as having been socially monotonous. It was characterized by a repetitive cycle between home and school. During their high school years, many students anticipated that this cycle would end with the onset of university life. High school experiences were frequently marked by interactions with peers from similar backgrounds. It seemed to limit exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences. As a result, students attained

university with the expectation of encountering a broader range of ideas and individuals, fostering both personal and intellectual growth.

The transition to university was seen as an opportunity to break free from the homogeneous social environment of high school. They believed that university life enabled for engagement with a more diverse community. This shift was not only anticipated to enrich their social lives but also to enhance their critical thinking and adaptability by exposing them to varied viewpoints and experiences. The diversity encountered in university settings was thus crucial in broadening students' horizons. The students expected from universities to promote inclusivity and prepare them for the complexities of the globalized world. It underscored the transformative potential of higher education in shaping well-rounded, socially aware individuals.

Expecting more diversity in student profile. Participants envisioned a university environment where they could freely express their thoughts, ideas, and identities without any need for self-censorship. They anticipated that the transition from high school to university would break the confines of their limited social circles. It was believed to allow them to meet individuals from diverse backgrounds and with different perspectives. This expectation included a hope for a vibrant and heterogeneous community where intellectual and personal growth could flourish.

However, many students found that their university peers *predominantly hailed from the same city or nearby regions, limiting the diversity of perspectives and experiences.* This homogeneity was noted to be less pronounced in programs like medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry, which attracted students from various cities due to the higher employment prospects of these fields. Consequently, these programs tended to draw a more diverse student body, contrasting with the more localized profiles of other disciplines. This discrepancy highlighted a significant aspect of university life in Türkiye. The employment potential of certain fields influenced the geographic diversity of the student population. *The findings suggested that while universities had the potential to be melting pots of diverse ideas and backgrounds, this potential was often unrealized outside of specific high-demand fields.* Thus, the fact that the universities could attract students from their cities and nearby cities impacted the overall student experience and the richness of the academic environment.

Social life and academic opportunities. The dynamics of the city in which a university was located significantly influenced the university experience for students. In smaller cities, the limited social opportunities often led to student dissatisfaction. Participants frequently described their social lives in such cities as confined to cafes, with occasional outings to the cinema as their primary source of entertainment. In contrast, bigger cities offered a wealth of social opportunities, providing students with numerous alternatives for cultural and recreational activities. The participants in AYBU reported experiencing a vibrant urban life rich with options such as private and state theaters, musicals, art exhibitions, and museums. This diversity of social offerings in large cities greatly enhanced their overall university experience. Even when universities themselves might lack adequate social facilities, the broader urban environment compensated for these deficiencies, ensuring that students in larger cities had ample opportunities for social and cultural engagement. This contrast highlighted the disparity in social opportunities between small and large cities. In addition, it underscored the importance of the urban setting in shaping the overall satisfaction and enrichment of students' university lives.

In addition, the differences in academic opportunities between cities also emerged as significant factors influencing students' university experiences. In larger cities such as Ankara, the greater number of public libraries supported students' research and study efforts. The availability of well-designed cafes in library concepts enhanced motivation of students to study and engage in academic work. Additionally, the presence of diverse institutions in major cities, particularly in the capital city of Ankara, further enriched the academic environment. Ankara's status as the capital means it hosted numerous government ministries and agencies, as well as representatives from various private sectors. This concentration of public and private institutions facilitated increased opportunities for collaboration and engagement between universities and external organizations. Students benefited from these connections through internships, research projects, and networking opportunities, which were more readily available in larger cities compared to smaller ones. *This dynamic showed the significant role that city infrastructure and institutional presence play in enhancing the academic engagement of university students*. That means it highlighted a clear disparity between the academic resources and opportunities available in large versus small cities.

Impact of ideology and religion. Participants from smaller cities such as Rize, Adıyaman and Uşak expressed discomfort with the attitudes of residents towards university students when compared to the participants in Ankara. They underscored that local people often had in accepting students from outside the region. University students were sometimes viewed solely as sources of economic benefit, with limited displays of support or assistance from the local community. This perception highlighted a disconnect between the university and the broader community. In small cities, university students felt unwelcome or even marginalized in their academic pursuits. The lack of integration between university students and residents in smaller cities underscored the need for greater efforts to foster mutual understanding and cooperation between these groups.

Furthermore, in smaller cities, dominant ideological and religious views were noticeably pervasive, often influenced by the presence of certain political parties and religious cults. *The impact of these entities cannot be overlooked in shaping the prevailing ideological and religious pressures that intruded on students' personal domains*. It affected their ability to express their own beliefs transparently. Examples included constraints on expressing personal opinions openly and experiencing constant social pressures in gender interactions. These pressures contributed to an environment where students felt compelled to conform to societal norms and expectations. That means it potentially stifled their individuality and autonomy. The pervasive influence of ideological and religious factors in smaller cities underscored the need for greater awareness and support mechanisms to promote diversity of thought and expression within university communities.

Different economic viability of cities. Participants' characterization of cities as student-friendly was not solely based on the attitudes of residents but also hinged on the city's economic advantages or disadvantages. Participants primarily perceived studying in Western cities and metropolitan cities of Türkiye as more financially burdensome. Those studying in smaller cities felt comparatively more economically fortunate. However, students in smaller cities also gauged their purchasing power in relation to neighboring cities. The perception of smaller cities as more affordable was not uniformly felt among students due to the costliness present in some smaller cities. This discrepancy challenged the notion of affordability in smaller cities, highlighting

the need for a nuanced understanding of the economic dynamics affecting students' experiences in different urban settings.

Newly-establishment status of universities. Participants in the study were cognizant of the fact that their respective universities are newly-established universities. This awareness influenced their perceptions and expectations regarding the academic and social landscape within these institutions. *It led them to hold more tempered expectations regarding the overall quality and capabilities of their universities compared to well-established counterparts in Türkiye.* They attributed many of the existing limitations and challenges within their academic environments to the relative novelty of their institutions. It cites factors such as the absence of ingrained traditions, evolving administrative structures, and developing academic programs.

Despite acknowledging their universities' potential for growth and improvement over time, participants did not foresee them posing a significant competitive threat to well-established universities in the short to medium term. This skepticism stemmed from various factors including a perceived disparity in the caliber of incoming students, the absence of deeply rooted institutional frameworks, and the ongoing process of establishing a cohesive academic community.

In addition, students at these institutions emphasized that they perceived their universities to be in a period of self-validation. Well-established universities often asserted their credibility through their academic research, alumni achievements, and the professional success of their graduates. However, for universities in this study, there existed a degree of uncertainty regarding what they can achieve and where their graduates will ultimately work. These uncertainties stemmed from the lack of a proven track record and institutional identity. Well-established universities had a well-defined identity built over years or even centuries, allowing them to leverage their reputation and achievements as proof of their excellence. In contrast, newly established universities faced the daunting task of carving out a new identity from scratch. It entailed not only establishing their academic programs and research initiatives but also cultivated a strong alumni network and fostering relationships with sector.

However, participants also expressed frustration that their status as newly established institutions became an ingrained label. It overshadowed the progress and development

of newly established universities. While acknowledging that their universities might not yet reach the pinnacle of educational quality comparable to well-established institutions, they emphasized that there was also a significant disparity between being perceived as inferior and lacking in educational quality. They candidly described the undervaluation of educational quality as an underrated aspect of their institutions. Despite the challenges associated with being newly established, participants highlighted the strides their universities have made in advancing their educational offerings and academic resources. They stressed the importance of recognizing and promoting these advancements, rather than solely focusing on the institutional status of being new. While they might not yet rival the educational prestige of well-established universities, participants asserted that their institutions offered a quality of education that exceeded the perception of being at the bottom tier.

Moreover, the transition from a pre-existing identity to a new one could be particularly challenging for universities that have undergone a transformation. The process of dismantling the perceptions associated with the previous identity and reshaping them into a new narrative was fraught with complexities. This involved not only rebranding the university in the eyes of the public but also fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty among students, faculty, and staff to the new institutional identity.

In conclusion, the process of self-validation for newly established universities was marked by uncertainty and complexity. While well-established universities could rely on their historical achievements and reputation to bolster their credibility, newly established institutions must navigate the challenges of establishing a new identity. In addition, they must prove their worth through their academic endeavors, alumni success, and professional achievements of their graduates. This journey towards self-validation required careful planning, strategic decision-making, and a commitment to excellence in all aspects of university life.

Perceived as representative of some ideological views. Participants experienced instances within universities where certain ideological viewpoints were either highlighted or marginalized. They expressed discomfort with the tendency for university collaborations, organized conferences, invited speakers, and event

frameworks and contents to progress under specific thematic agendas. They expected universities not to appear as representatives of certain ideological perspectives.

These experiences highlighted a broader concern among participants regarding the perceived politicization of academia and the potential for universities to become platforms for the promotion of ideological agendas. They emphasized the importance of universities as spaces for open dialogue, critical thinking, and the exchange of diverse perspectives. However, when universities appeared to align themselves with specific ideologies or prioritize certain viewpoints over others, participants expressed concern about the erosion of academic freedom.

In this dimension, experiences of participants underlined the importance of maintaining academic neutrality and intellectual pluralism within universities. They advocated for a university environment that embraced diverse perspectives, encouraged critical inquiry, and fostered respectful dialogue across ideological divides. By upholding these principles, universities could fulfill their role as engines of knowledge creation and dissemination while nurturing a culture of intellectual curiosity and academic freedom.

4.2.1.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

The similarities among 4 cases in terms of academic engagement can be categorized as (I) insufficiency of faculty numbers, (II) divergence in communication styles of academic members within class and beyond, (III) intensity of theoretically-oriented courses, (IV) limited utilization of diverse teaching strategies, (V) various practices in assessment of learning, (VI) variations in the importance given to courses by students, (VII) the lack of preparedness for online teaching, (VIII) shortages in physical infrastructure, (IX) differences in access to academic resources, (X) shaping university life with only focus on academic development, (XI) inadequacies in internationalization efforts, and (XII) prioritizing public appointment in career planning.

Insufficiency in the number of faculty members. In Türkiye, the landscape of higher education experienced a significant quantitative surge, marked by a proliferation of universities over a relatively brief timeframe. This expansion was driven by various

factors, including government initiatives to increase access to higher education, the establishment of private universities and public universities across different regions of the country. Despite the commendable effort to broaden access to higher education, this rapid quantitative growth exposed a critical issue*: the insufficient increase in the number of faculty members to meet the escalating demands of an expanding student population.* While the establishment of new universities widened educational opportunities geographically, it placed strains on the existing pool of academic staff.

Faculty members found themselves obliged to teach courses outside their areas of expertise. This was because of citing the lack of available faculty members to teach these courses. This phenomenon not only compromised the depth and accuracy of course content but also undermined the effectiveness of the learning experience for students. According to the participants, when faculty members were required to teach courses outside their areas of expertise, they struggled to provide comprehensive explanations, offer relevant examples, or address nuanced questions from students. As a result, students encountered difficulties grasping complex concepts.

Moreover, the presence of faculty members teaching beyond their specialization created a dissonance between the intended learning outcomes of a course and the actual delivery of instruction. Students perceived a lack of coherence or relevance in the curriculum. It led to disengagement and frustration with the learning process. It seemed to hinder their academic progress and overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

The participants generally perceived academics educated at Türkiye's well-established universities or abroad as particularly talented and successful. Students frequently reported that these instructors with their extensive experience and diverse educational backgrounds significantly enhanced the quality of classroom instruction. They found that the course delivered by such academics were more engaging and the courses themselves more compelling. Their international exposure and familiarity with diverse academic traditions likely fostered a deeper understanding of course material among students. Moreover, the presence of these well-educated and experienced academics in the classroom not only elevated the academic standards but also inspired and

motivated students. It seemed potentially lead to better academic outcomes and greater intellectual curiosity.

However, it was observed that these talented academics generally sought positions in universities located in western cities of Türkiye. The universities in the western part of Türkiye were perceived to offer better career prospects, research opportunities and academic resources. Particularly, participants from universities situated in the eastern region felt fortunate to receive instruction from these talented faculty members, recognizing the value they brought to their educational experience. However, they also witnessed that aside from a few quality faculty members working in their hometowns, most tended to view these universities as stepping stone toward securing positions in the universities in western Türkiye. This trend highlighted broader disparities in academic opportunities and resources between different regions of the country. It also underlined the challenges faced by universities outside major urban centers in attracting and retaining top academic talents.

Divergence in communication styles of academic members within class and beyond. Academic members sometimes exhibited different communication styles with students, both inside and outside the classroom. Sometimes, within the classroom, they adopted a more authoritative approach which appeared condescending or controlling. As a result, the tendency to maintain control within the classroom environment could hinder students from asking questions and sharing their ideas freely. Additionally, this authoritarian demeanor might inadvertently discourage open dialogue and critical thinking. It created a barrier to effective learning and intellectual exchange.

In contrast to this approach, it was often observed that academic staff tended to adopt a more inclusive and mentoring attitude outside the classroom. Students found it comfortable to engage with faculty members on topics such as recommended resources, internship experiences, and future career plans outside of class. They expressed that the guiding and mentoring approaches of academic staff were extremely helpful to them. This nurturing environment fostered a sense of trust and openness, encouraging students to seek guidance and support from their professors beyond the confines of formal classroom settings.

However, some students perceived that the authoritarian approaches witnessed in the classroom setting could seemingly impede interactions with academic staff outside of class as well. It was observed that more proactive students were able to discover and benefit from faculty members' open-door policy. This suggested that while the nurturing environment outside the classroom existed, it might not be equally accessible or perceived as welcoming by all students, potentially due to the lingering impact of authoritative classroom dynamics.

Intensity of theoretical courses. The intensity of theoretical and practical courses varied significantly depending on the academic department. Fields such as Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Engineering, Architecture, and Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation particularly emphasized practical courses due to the presence of laboratory classes. These hands-on sessions were essential, as they allowed students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, which was crucial for their future professional competence. In contrast, departments such as Humanities and Social Sciences tended to focus more on theoretical courses. The participants expressed that in these theory-heavy programs, the material could sometimes feel abstract and difficult to grasp. This led to a sense of being overwhelmed. This often resulted in a loss of motivation, as students struggled to connect the theoretical content with practical applications. More focus on theoretical approaches made the learning process seem less engaging and relevant.

Students in practical-oriented programs benefited from a curriculum that integrated laboratory work and real-world problem-solving. This experiential learning approach enhanced their understanding and retention of complex concepts. It seemed to provide a solid foundation for their professional practice. Practical sessions also helped in developing critical thinking and technical skills that were vital for success in their respective fields. Conversely, students in more theory-focused programs sometimes faced challenges in staying motivated and engaged. The lack of practical application could make it difficult to see the relevance of what they are learning. It hindered their overall academic experience. Integrating more case studies, projects, and interactive elements could potentially bridge this gap, making theoretical concepts more tangible and easier to understand. Many students voiced concerns that the heavy emphasis on theoretical content made the subjects seem disconnected from real-world applications.

This disconnect could lead to a decreased sense of purpose and enthusiasm for their studies. Finding a balance between theory and practice was essential to ensure that students not only understood the material but also saw its value and application in real-life contexts.

Limited utilization of diverse teaching strategies. The participants emphasized the persistent use of homogeneous instructional strategies in classroom settings. They frequently encountered lecturing that was predominantly centered around presentations. In certain courses, instructors used these presentations as supplementary tools to convey ideas and facilitate discussion within the scope of the covered material. However, it was observed that instructors often read verbatim from the slides without providing additional commentary or contextual insights. This practice led students to question the necessity of attending classes, as they perceived that the same information could be obtained by merely reviewing the presentation slides independently.

Some faculty members endeavored to enrich the dynamics of classroom instruction by fostering environments conducive to group work, brainstorming, and critical thinking discussions. It was observed that such approaches were more prevalent within Faculties of Education compared to other faculties. While similar initiatives seldom existed in courses focused on social sciences, it was noted that in subjects falling under the umbrella of natural sciences, such alternative teaching strategies were somewhat limited.

Various practices in assessment of learning. It was commonly observed that faculty members primarily relied on midterm and final exams to assess students' performance. Such examinations were a longstanding tradition in education and were considered a staple of academic evaluation since the inception of students' educational journeys. However, there was a prevailing belief among participants that assessing academic performance solely based on written exams did not accurately reflect the reality of students' performace in university settings. The participants expected to see a shift towards adopting more long-term and process-oriented assessment approaches such as project-based activities. They anticipated that alternative methods emphasizing the development and execution of projects over an extended period would better align with

the complexities and demands of real-world scenarios. It was believed to foster deeper learning and practical skills acquisition among students.

The participants expressed feeling more apprehensive when faced with open-ended questions compared to multiple-choice questions. As the former required deeper reflection leaving more room for uncertainty in their responses. They noted that while multiple-choice questions often provided clear options to choose, open-ended questions demanded a thorough understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate thoughts coherently. On the other hand, some participants harbored doubts regarding the fairness of evaluating open-ended exams. While some believed that these exams were not meticulously and thoroughly reviewed, others voiced concerns about discrepancies in grading due to evaluations being conducted by different individuals. This concern highlighted the subjective nature of assessing open-ended responses and raised questions about consistency and impartiality in the evaluation process.

While midterm and final exams predominantly prevailed as the primary assessment approach, it was observed that some faculties employ alternative methods at these junctures. With the inclusion of laboratory sessions in Faculties of Engineering faculties, students were expected to document their findings in reports following each laboratory session. As these practical-oriented laboratory classes served as a bridge between theoretical lectures, students valued the significance of these reports, emphasizing that they contributed to enhancing their learning experiences. The expressed that the process of compiling these reports reinforced their understanding of the subject matter. In addition, it helped solidify their theoretical knowledge through hands-on application and experimentation.

In Faculties of Medicine, a committee-based evaluation system prevailed during the assessment phase. The participants noted being evaluated through a single examination format encompassing all the courses taken throughout the term. This single exam included questions covering content from all the courses they undertook. This system often involved committees composed of faculty members who collaborated to design and administer assessments. These assessments frequently took the form of comprehensive examinations that covered material from multiple courses

or subjects. This approach was noted for its ability to provide a holistic evaluation of students' knowledge and skills across various domains of medicine.

Following the written evaluation by the committee, a verbal assessment component was also integrated into the evaluation process in Faculties of Medicine. Committee members tasked students with interpreting given scenarios, requiring them to analyze the presented situation. For instance, students might be presented with a clinical case and asked to discuss potential etiologies, treatment modalities, and limitations encountered during the treatment process. This verbal assessment allowed students to demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, critically analyze complex scenarios, and communicate their understanding effectively. Furthermore, these approaches supported students to foster critical thinking skills and prepare students for the complex challenges they would encounter in clinical practice.

The participants from Faculties of Dentistry, particularly due to their focus on health sciences, were familiar with the evaluation methods prevalent in Faculties of Medicine. They indicated that, unlike the committee-based evaluations in medical faculties, the Faculty of Dentistry typically employed separate assessments for each course, conducted through laboratory work, midterms, and final exams. While in Faculties of Dentistry, failing a course might only require retaking that specific course in subsequent terms, in Faculties of Dentistry, even failing one or two courses could resulted in being unable to advance to the next academic year. This situation led to heightened stress among students, as they feel the pressure to succeed in every course to progress in their studies. The participants from Faculties of Dentistry also expressed a desire for a committee-based evaluation system similar to that of Faculties of Medicine.

In Faculties of Architecture, two main evaluation approaches were observed: open juries and closed juries. In practical courses, projects produced by students were assessed by juries composed of faculty members. Each faculty member in the jury evaluated specific aspects of the projects according to the content of the courses they taught and assigned grades accordingly. In closed juries, students submitted their projects to the relevant jury panel and did not participate in the evaluation process.

However, in open juries, students presented their projects in front of the jury members, allowing them to explain their projects with strengths and limitations. The participants found open juries more effective in this regard, as they could directly express their thoughts to the jury members. Nonetheless, participants noted that the harsh expression of negative opinions by jury members could demotivate them.

Variations of courses in the curriculum. The majority of participants generally perceived the field courses within their respective departments to be of greater value compared to courses outside their main field of study. This perception was especially pronounced when considering elective courses or those offered within the minor areas of their departments. Many students expressed skepticism regarding the necessity and relevance of these courses. Furthermore, it appeared that some students did not realize the potential benefits that certain courses could offer in terms of their professional development. These findings suggested a need for greater awareness and better communication about the role and importance of a diverse curriculum. By highlighting how various courses contributed to a well-rounded education and professional skill set, educational institutions could help students appreciate the broader value of their academic programs.

At the outset of undergraduate education, the predominance of field courses over elective ones might contribute to lower satisfaction levels among students due to a perceived lack of immersion in their chosen field. This sentiment was particularly evident in disciplines such as engineering, where introductory years typically consisted of core subjects like mathematics, physics, and chemistry. The emphasis on these foundational courses reinforced the notion of laying groundwork but might fall short in fostering a distinct sense of belonging or engagement within the discipline. However, as students progressed through their undergraduate studies, there was typically a shift towards more specialized and discipline-specific courses. This transition played a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of their academic program. With the increasing prevalence of specialized courses in later years, students were afforded the opportunity to delve deeper into their chosen field.

Furthermore, it was emphasized that the content of mandatory courses such as Turkish Language and Atatürk Principles and Revolution History offered by CoHE did not

differ significantly from that of previous educational levels. Consequently, students perceived these courses as unnecessary and tended to neglect them. The perception that these courses offered little new content compared to what students had already encountered in earlier educational stages led to a diminished sense of relevance. As a result, students questioned the necessity of dedicating time and effort to these courses, especially when they perceived them as redundant or lacking in value-added content. This highlighted the importance of revisiting the content and delivery methods of mandatory courses to ensure that they offered engaging learning experiences for students.

The lack of preparedness for online teaching. The rapid paradigm shift to online teaching raised significant concerns regarding awareness and infrastructure issues. In particular, the onset of the pandemic exposed major challenges for both faculty members and students who lacked prior experience with online learning. Faculty members and students alike initially struggled with the transition, as they grappled with the unfamiliarity of the online learning environment. Students accustomed to traditional classroom instruction faced difficulties in adapting to online learning methods. They found the online format to be less effective, citing issues such as ineffective knowledge dissemination, limited opportunities for discussion and idea exchange, the absence of non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions, and the disappearance of classroom interactions.

Furthermore, the situation was exacerbated by some instructors' attempts to directly transfer the teaching methods and strategies they employed in traditional instruction to the online learning environment. This approach proved to be particularly problematic, as it failed to account for the unique dynamics and challenges inherent in online teaching and learning. One notable issue was the tendency for instructors to maintain the same duration for online class sessions as in traditional settings. However, this overlooked the fact that online teaching required different approaches to maintain student engagement and focus. The rigid adherence to traditional class lengths in online settings resulted in students experiencing difficulties in maintaining their concentration. The extended duration of online classes led to mental fatigue and decreased attention spans, ultimately hindering students' ability to effectively absorb and retain course material. Additionally, the passive nature of online teaching coupled

with the absence of face-to-face interaction further exacerbated the challenge of sustaining student engagement over prolonged periods.

One of the significant issues in terms of online teaching was the unequal access to technological infrastructure among students. Some participants reported difficulties in accessing synchronous classes due to the lack of internet infrastructure in their respective regions. The prominence of such problems during the process prompted universities to record synchronous courses and shared them with students through the platforms they used. Due to technological infrastructure deficiencies during the online period, students often experienced issues such as overlapping voices and frequent disconnections, forcing them to mute their cameras and microphones. This situation created a perception that they were merely watching a course on platforms like YouTube. Coupled with the blurred boundaries between their living space and classroom environment, students found it challenging to differentiate between the two, leading to a lack of motivation to participate in online classes. While participants generally acknowledged the shortcomings and ethical concerns associated with online instruction, the sharing of recorded courses deemed beneficial for their individual schedules. The found it advantageous to watch lecture recordings at their convenience since it was believed to provide flexibility within their own schedules.

Furthermore, in the realm of online teaching, a concerning trend emerged as students exhibited a prevalent inclination towards academic dishonesty, commonly manifested in acts of cheating. This pervasive phenomenon raised questions about the validity and reliability of assessment outcomes. It suggested that the grades obtained during this period may not accurately gauge students' genuine academic capabilities. Amid the transition to remote learning, the traditional mechanisms for invigilating exams and monitoring student behavior should undergone significant modifications. Hence, students might perceive online assessments as presenting greater opportunities for circumventing academic integrity standards, leading to a surge in cheating incidents across various educational platforms.

Shortages of physical infrastructure. Despite admitting students, some faculties lacked their own dedicated buildings. These faculties were often constrained to utilize one or two floors allocated to them within buildings shared with other faculties. This

arrangement negatively impacted students' sense of belonging to their faculties. The limited physical space allocated to these faculties not only affected their operational efficiency but also undermined the establishment of a distinct identity and community within the university. Without dedicated facilities, students felt disconnected from their faculties and struggled to engage fully in academic activities. This fragmentation of physical infrastructure hampered the development of a cohesive campus environment. In addition, it diminished opportunities for faculty-specific initiatives and collaborations. Addressing the inadequacy of physical infrastructure required strategic investments in campus development and expansion. Allocating dedicated buildings or spaces to faculties could enhance their visibility, promote a sense of ownership among students and faculty members. Moreover, it could foster a more vibrant and cohesive campus community. Additionally, ensuring equitable access to resources and facilities across all faculties was essential for promoting inclusivity and enhancing the overall student experience.

Additionally, with the continuous increase in university enrollments, classrooms and laboratories within faculties begun to become insufficient. This trend highlighted the strain on existing academic infrastructure and the challenges associated with accommodating growing student populations. The shortage of classrooms and laboratories negatively impacted the quality of education and research opportunities available to students. Overcrowded classrooms could hinder effective teaching and learning experiences, while limited access to laboratories can restrict hands-on learning experiences essential for scientific education. Addressing this issue required strategic planning and investment in expanding academic infrastructure to accommodate the growing demand. Allocating resources for the construction of new classrooms, laboratories, and other academic facilities was essential for ensuring that faculties could effectively fulfill their educational and research missions. Additionally, adopting innovative teaching methods and optimizing the use of existing resources could help alleviate some of the challenges associated with limited physical space.

Differences in access to academic resources. The participants in the study reported diverse experiences regarding access to resources, with a notable emphasis on the availability and quality of chemicals and materials within laboratory settings. Specifically, participants highlighted challenges encountered within university

laboratories. They particularly concerned about expendable materials. One common issue raised was the presence of expired or outdated materials since they significantly compromised the integrity and reliability of experimental results. Moreover, the consequences of using expired materials extended beyond the immediate experimental outcomes. In many cases, students and researchers were required to document their findings, analyze data, and prepare reports or research papers based on their experiments. However, when the integrity of the experimental data was compromised due to the use of expired materials, it became challenging to generate accurate, reliable, and scientifically valid results. This undermined the credibility of academic research in the scientific process.

As mentioned, participants acknowledged the presence of laboratory equipment in universities; however, they also highlighted instances where the quantity of equipment available was insufficient to meet the needs of students. This inadequacy often resulted in students either carrying out scientific processes sequentially or some students actively engaging in experiments while others were relegated to observation roles. The continuous increase in student enrollment within universities exacerbated this issue, making it even more challenging to address. As student numbers grew, the demand for laboratory resources and equipment escalated correspondingly. Consequently, universities faced mounting pressure to expand their facilities and enhance resource allocation to accommodate the burgeoning student population adequately.

Another aspect concerned the utilization of human resources for networking with the industry. The advantage of Ankara being the capital city was evident with the presence of numerous ministries, governmental agencies, and powerful representatives from the private sector. The availability of top officials and influential figures from these institutions and organizations provided an opportunity for university faculty members, particularly, to establish strong networks by being invited as guest speakers or participants in various forums and events hosted by these entities.

Shaping university life with only focus on academic development. Participants found that their university experience fell short of their expectations for a richer social life, opportunities for personal growth, and the ability to pursue hobbies, as they were met with a university life predominantly focused on academic development. The constant

emphasis placed by academic staff on academic performance further reinforced this perception among students. Consequently, students felt as though their university experience resembled an extension of their high school years. They struggled to differentiate between their experiences in high school and university. They felt a sense of continuity rather than a distinct transition.

These findings underscored the importance of achieving a balance between academic and social aspects of university life. It suggested a need for universities to reassess their educational approaches, placing greater emphasis on holistic student development rather than solely on academic achievement. Additionally, it highlighted the necessity for educators to recognize the significance of cultivating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. These types of university environment nurtured both academic excellence and personal growth.

Inadequacies in internationalization efforts. The participants highlighted deficiencies and inadequacies in terms of internationalization efforts within the university. For instance, the inclusion of solely Turkish-language sources in course materials with a noticeable absence of recommendations for international sources was brought to attention. Additionally, the fact that students lacked proficiency in foreign languages was particularly emphasized by participants familiar with English-medium university. On the other hand, this discrepancy did not seem to apply to English medium university. It was noted that faculty members actively engaged with and incorporated international sources into their teaching practices. They recommended relevant books and utilized them effectively in their courses.

However, in English medium university, the English proficiency of academic staff assumed a paramount role in facilitating effective teaching and learning experiences. Students placed significant importance on the fluency of English-speaking faculty members, as they perceived fluency to be indicative of mastery over the subject matter. Consequently, when faculty members struggled with English fluency or pronunciation, students encountered challenges in comprehending complex concepts, engaging in meaningful discussions and internalizing course content.

Participants indicated that they regard their pre-undergraduate English preparatory education as more akin to a hiatus. It might be attributed this perception to the

exhaustion incurred during the preparatory phase for the centralized university entrance examination. Consequently, they asserted that their English language proficiency failed to undergo substantial development. Upon matriculating into undergraduate programs, students occasionally encountered difficulties in comprehending course materials. This phenomenon subsequently exerted a deleterious impact on the pedagogical quality. Furthermore, it was noteworthy that certain students abstained from responding to questions during English medium midterm and final examinations due to their inability to discern the intended essence of the posed questions. Moreover, the language barrier posed by faculty members' limited English proficiency hindered students' ability to actively participate in class discussions, seek clarification on course material, or express their ideas and opinions articulately.

In all cases, participants expressed a strong desire to engage in the Erasmus program as a significant component of their aspiration for overseas academic experiences. Particularly, they perceived the opportunity for immersion in a foreign country as invaluable for gaining life experiences and encountering diverse individuals. However, a significant deterrent preventing many participants from applying to these programs was their lack of proficiency in a foreign language. Participants particularly emphasized the importance of learning English. They asserted that in today's world, merely possessing proficiency in a single foreign language was insufficient. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support they received from their universities for learning English. They found the mandatory English courses mandated by CoHE as perfunctory and unproductive. They argued that these courses lacked effectiveness and failed to provide them with adequate opportunities to develop their language skills. Consequently, participants expressed a desire for more meaningful opportunities to acquire foreign language proficiency.

Moreover, within English-medium universities, Turkish students often faced a disadvantage in comparison to their international counterparts in Erasmus applications, as both groups were typically evaluated under the same criteria. Participants highlighted that this equivalence placed Turkish students at a disadvantage, as international students were presumed to have already met the foreign language proficiency requirements necessary for their enrollment. This finding

underscored the challenges faced by Turkish students seeking to compete on an international academic platform.

Another noteworthy finding among the participants was the significance attributed to the number of international students enrolled in their universities as a key indicator of internationalization. However, participants underscored that the majority of incoming international students hailed predominantly from Arab, African, and Turkic Republic countries. They emphasized that the presence of these international students significantly contributed to the shaping of the university's cultural landscape. Participants observed that the prevailing presence of cultural elements specific to Arab culture on campus was closely correlated with the influx of international students from predominantly Arab regions. Their critique underscored a broader concern regarding the potential international homogenization of campus culture. This critique aligned with scholarly discourse on the importance of diversity in higher education. Furthermore, participants advocated for a proactive approach to cultivating cultural diversity by actively seeking to attract students from America and Europe. Their suggestion reflected a recognition of the value of cross-cultural exchange in higher education. In fact, it was about understanding of the potential benefits. More heterogeneous student body could offer to enrich the intellectual and social fabric of the university community.

Prioritizing public appointment in career planning. Most participants seemed to reflect their career plans greatly influenced by their socio-economic backgrounds, which predominantly stemmed from middle to lower-income family structures. Many participants' career aspirations were notably centered around securing a position in the public sector. This inclination towards public sector employment was largely driven by the perceived advantages in terms of job security and better employment benefits. Consequently, participants' career trajectories often revolved around preparation for the Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS). Particularly as they approached their final years of university life, the pressure of excelling in this exam became increasingly prevalent among them.

It was observed that even faculty members structured their course content and exam questions with a focus on KPSS. This trend raised questions about whether

universities' primary objective was to ensure their students' success in the KPSS. The alignment of educational objectives with the requirements of a standardized exam like the KPSS underscored a potential shift in the purpose of higher education institutions. Rather than prioritizing the cultivation of critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills relevant to students' chosen fields, there appeared to be an increasing emphasis on preparing students for a specific standardized test. This phenomenon prompted a critical examination of the broader goals and values of higher education institutions in fostering well-rounded and capable graduates.

4.2.1.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

University in terms of psychological engagement can be categorized as (I) variations in individual autonomy and responsibility, (II) evolution of family longing in university life, (III) factors affecting psychological wellbeing, and (IV) anxiety for the future.

Variations in individual autonomy and responsibility. Most participants indicated that from childhood to the beginning of their university life, nearly all responsibilities in their lives were undertaken by their families. This extensive familial involvement often resulted in participants being sheltered within a metaphorical cage, thereby limiting their opportunities for direct interaction with the outside world. Consequently, the dominance of their families in various aspects of their lives significantly hindered the development of personal autonomy and responsibility. Such findings suggested that the overprotective environment and lack of exposure to real-world challenges impeded individuals' ability to cultivate essential life skills and self-reliance. They were crucial for navigating the complexities of university life and beyond.

Despite most participants coming from nearby cities, the physical distance from their families upon entering university played a crucial role in making them aware of their personal responsibilities. This newfound separation served as a catalyst for self-discovery and personal growth. Especially at the beginning of their university life, they felt like fish out of water, lacking the experience and knowledge of how to handle various tasks independently. They had to navigate a wide range of responsibilities for the first time from basic chores like cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry to more tasks such as paying bills and interacting with government services. On the other hand,

previously, their families had maintained a dominant role in decision-making. Participants relied heavily on their parents for guidance and support. This dependency hindered their ability to develop essential life skills. However, the shift in their living situation with university life demanded a complete reversal of this dynamic. They were now required to make academic and social decisions independently and face the consequences with their pros and cons.

The initial transition to university life was marked by significant challenges. Many students struggled with the sudden influx of responsibilities and the need to manage their time and resources effectively. However, over time, this experience fostered a profound development of individual autonomy. The necessity to manage daily tasks and make independent decisions contributed to a growing sense of self-efficacy and competence. This period of adjustment, although difficult, was instrumental in helping students build resilience and self-confidence. Moreover, the process of overcoming these initial hurdles and successfully managing their own lives provided students with a strong sense of accomplishment and self-worth. This sense of achievement was crucial for their overall development, as it reinforced the value of individual autonomy and responsibility. The experience of navigating university life independently prepared them for future challenges, both personal and professional, by equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in various aspects of life.

However, for students who continued living with their families during their university years, similar transformative experiences were not as apparent. These students reported that, much like in their previous educational stages, many of their individual responsibilities were still managed by other family members. This reliance on family for daily tasks and decision-making continued to hinder their ability to fully develop personal autonomy and responsibility. Living at home allowed these students to maintain the comfort and support system they were accustomed to, but it also perpetuated their dependency on their families. Tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and even managing personal affairs were often handled by parents or other family members. It prevented the students from experiencing the same level of self-sufficiency as their peers who lived independently. This ongoing familial support meant that they did not face the same necessity to make independent decisions or manage their own responsibilities.

The findings suggest that living at home perpetuated a controlled environment similar to their pre-university experience, limiting the students' ability to develop full independence and autonomy. The need to constantly report to their families about their daily activities undermined their ability to make independent choices and navigate the social aspects of university life freely. This constant oversight by parents often meant that these students could not fully engage in the exploratory and self-defining experiences that are crucial during university years.

In addition, students who continued to live at home during their university years experienced a different set of challenges, often remaining under significant familial control. This dynamic was particularly evident among female students who frequently had to report their comings and goings, detail who they were spending time with, and explain their activities to their families. These requirements highlighted the continued parental involvement in their decision-making processes, even into adulthood. The findings suggested that living at home perpetuated a controlled environment similar to their pre-university experience. It limited the students' ability to develop full independence and autonomy. The need to constantly report to their families about their daily activities undermined their ability to make independent choices and navigate the social aspects of university life freely. This constant oversight by parents often meant that these students could not fully engage in the exploratory and self-defining experiences.

The gendered nature of this control was particularly notable. Female students reported stricter supervision and more frequent demands for accountability compared to their male students. This disparity reflected broader societal and cultural norms regarding gender roles and expectations. It constrained the autonomy of female students living at home. The requirement to adhere to parental expectations and limitations inhibited these students' ability to experience the same level of personal growth and freedom as their peers who lived independently. Moreover, this extended parental oversight often meant that these students were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, social events, and other opportunities. The constant need to balance familial expectations with academic and social pursuits created additional stress and limited their ability to fully immerse themselves in the university experience.

The findings suggested that the lack of a significant shift in their living arrangements contributed to a stagnation in their individuation process. Unlike their peers who were forced to adapt to a new environment and take on new responsibilities, these students remained in a familiar setting where their roles and routines were largely unchanged. As a result, they did not experience the same development of essential life skills that were critical for personal autonomy. Furthermore, the prolonged dependency on family members likely impeded their ability to navigate challenges independently. This could have long-term implications for their confidence and competence in managing personal and professional tasks in the future. The experience of overcoming difficulties and making independent decisions was markedly less pronounced for these students.

To sum up, while the transition to university life was initially daunting for many participants, it ultimately proved to be a pivotal period for developing individual autonomy and responsibility. While university life served as a critical period for the development of personal autonomy and responsibility, this process was significantly influenced by the students' living arrangements. Those who continued to live with their families did not experience the same level of personal growth as their peers who lived independently.

Evolution of family longing in university life. Many participants reported experiencing profound longing for family as a result of being physically separated from their families. This feeling was particularly pronounced at the beginning of their university life, when fears of not knowing anyone, struggling to make friends, and facing loneliness were most acute. During this initial period, frequent phone calls and video chats with family members were common. It provided a vital connection to their familiar support system. The findings highlighted that these frequent communications were a crucial coping mechanism for students as they transitioned into their new environment. The regular contact with family helped to mitigate feelings of isolation and provided emotional support during the challenging early days of university life. As participants began to establish friendships and integrate into the social fabric of university, the frequency of phone and video calls to their families gradually decreased. The development of a supportive peer network played a significant role in reducing homesickness and fostering a sense of belonging.

Interestingly, some students noted that the physical distance from their families led them to appreciate their families more and strengthened family bonds. The separation allowed them to gain a greater understanding of their families' value. It contributed to enhanced familial relationships. Participants reported that being away from home provided them with a new perspective on their family dynamics and increased their appreciation for the support and care of their families. Furthermore, visits to the family home during university breaks were characterized by more meaningful and quality time spent together. The limited opportunities to be with family made these visits more special and valued. Students mentioned that they were more intentional about making the most of their time with family, engaging in activities that strengthened their bonds and created lasting memories.

That mean the physical separation from families during university life initially led to significant homesickness and frequent communication with family members. However, as students adapted to their new environment and built social networks, the need for constant family contact diminished. This period of separation ultimately contributed to a greater appreciation for family, strengthened family bonds, and more meaningful interactions during visits home. These findings underscored the complex interplay between physical distance and emotional closeness. It illustrated how the challenges of university life could foster personal growth and deeper familial relationships.

Factors affecting psychological well-being. The stressors of university life were mainly focus on exams, financial hardships, relationships built on personal gains and family pressure. Firstly, nearly all participants reported that the most significant source of stress during their university life was exams. This stress was particularly intense during midterms and final exam periods when anxiety about achieving passing grades peaked. Participants expressed concerns about whether they would be able to secure sufficient marks to pass their courses and avoid extending their time at university. The pressure to maintain a high GPA was another major stressor for students. With the high number of university graduates, competition in the job market intensified, making it more challenging to secure employment. Participants perceived a high GPA as a critical factor for standing out in this competitive landscape. They believed that

maintaining a strong academic record would enhance their job prospects post-graduation.

This emphasis on academic performance created a high stress environment where students felt constant pressure to excel. The necessity to balance coursework, study time, and exam preparation often led to significant stress and anxiety. The fear of academic failure and the potential consequences of not meeting academic expectations weighed heavily on students, affecting their overall wellbeing. Furthermore, the competitive job market amplified the pressure on students to achieve high grades. The perception that employers prioritized candidates with higher GPAs drove students to prioritize their academic performance above other aspects of university life. This singular focus on grades sometimes came at the expense of extracurricular activities, social interactions and personal wellbeing.

Secondly, financial hardship was one of major sources of stress for university students. Participants expressed feeling particularly unlucky to be experiencing university life during such challenging economic times. When comparing their own financial situations to those of their peers who had previously attended university, participants noted discrepancies that highlighted the economic strain they were facing. Conversations with individuals in their immediate social circles who had pursued higher education before them revealed disparities in economic circumstances. Participants found that the economic realities they were confronting did not align with the experiences of their predecessors. The continuous rise in prices and cost of living added to the stress of making ends meet within a defined budget.

The fluctuating economy and rising costs were significant stressors for participants, as they grappled with the challenge of managing their finances amidst uncertain economic conditions. The pressure to navigate university life while simultaneously dealing with financial constraints created a pervasive sense of anxiety and uncertainty. This finding underscored the importance of recognizing the intersectionality of stressors experienced by university students. While academic pressures such as exams were prominent, financial concerns also weighed heavily on students. Addressing these stressors required a multifaceted approach that acknowledged the complex interplay between academic, economic, and social factors in shaping the university

experience. The economic challenges underscored the need for greater support mechanisms and resources to assist students in managing their finances and alleviating the burden of financial stress. By addressing these challenges holistically, universities could better support the wellbeing and success of their students amidst the complexities of contemporary economic realities.

Thirdly, students underlined relationships built on personal gains as a stressor during university life. Participants emphasized the transient nature of their social relationships during their university years. For instance, the rapid formation of close friendships driven by the fear of loneliness at the outset of university exemplifies this phenomenon. Students, initially motivated by the anxiety of being alone, tended to gravitate towards those they first interacted with, regardless of compatibility. As their interactions with classmates increased, they began to form different friendships, often resulting in the dissolution of previous ones. However, the prevalence of relationships based on personal gain appears to deeply affect students mentally. This observation suggested that students felt emotionally unsettled by the instrumental nature of their friendships. The transient and utilitarian nature of these relationships led to feelings of distrust, insecurity, and a lack of genuine connection. Furthermore, the tendency for students to prioritize their own interests in forming social connections hindered the development of authentic and meaningful relationships. The emphasis on personal gain over genuine connection created a superficial social environment, where individuals felt isolated despite being surrounded by peers.

Fourthly, one of significant stress sources was family pressure, with this experience being more frequently mentioned by female students than male students. Female students in student homes or dormitories found it easier to manage this stressor due to the comfort of distance from their families. It allowed them to maintain more control over their lives. However, female students who reside in their family homes often faced constant pressure from their families. They were required to provide regular updates to their families about their whereabouts, who they were spending time with, and what they were doing. This familial pressure frequently led to stress for these students.

The gendered nature of this control was particularly notable. Female students reported stricter supervision and more frequent demands for accountability compared to their male counterparts. This disparity reflected broader societal and cultural norms regarding gender roles and expectations. The requirement to adhere to parental expectations and limitations inhibited these students' ability to experience the same level of personal growth and freedom as their peers who lived independently. Moreover, this extended parental oversight often meant that these students were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, social events, and other opportunities.

Anxiety for the future. Participants expressed significant anxiety about their future prospects during their university years. They particularly concerned their ability to achieve financial independence from their families. The high number of university graduates created intense competition in the job market. Students were deeply concerned about their economic sustainability and their prospects for finding employment post-graduation. This finding underlined the pervasive sense of uncertainty and insecurity that many students experienced regarding their future. The pressure to secure stable employment and achieve financial stability weighed heavily on their minds, influencing their academic and career decisions. Moreover, the economic challenges highlighted the broader societal issues surrounding youth unemployment and economic inequality. Addressing these concerns required comprehensive support systems and resources to assist students in navigating the complexities of the job market and transitioning into the workforce successfully. Universities played a crucial role in preparing students for the challenges in the professional world, both through academic programs and career development initiatives. Additionally, policies and programs aimed at promoting economic opportunity and reducing barriers to entry in the job market were essential for ensuring a brighter future for all students.

In addition, participants revealed that within the university environment, they often refrained from expressing their social and political beliefs freely due to concerns about their future prospects. The fear of repercussions, such as potential difficulties in finding employment or negative impacts on their personal lives, prevented them from openly expressing their thoughts and ideas. This created a stifling social atmosphere that constrained their ability to engage in free expression. For example, students who

participated in protests against university cafeteria price increases expressed worried about being labeled or facing consequences that could affect their future. These concerns reflected a broader pattern of anxiety among students about the potential consequences of expressing dissenting opinions or engaging in activism. This fear of reprisal or stigma inhibited their participation in a truly free and open university environment. These diverse perspectives and critical dialogue should be encouraged. It revealed the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive campus culture that valued and protected academic freedom and freedom of expression. Providing students with the assurance that they could express their views without fear of retribution was essential for fostering a vibrant intellectual community and preparing students to engage critically with the world around them.

4.2.1.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

University in terms of social engagement can be categorized as (I) limitations of separated campuses, (II) inadequacy in social opportunities of campus, (III) secure environment of campus, (IV) changing conditions in transportation to campus, (V) inactive student clubs, and (VI) framing communication within academic departments.

Limitations of separated campuses. Participants voiced concerns about separated university campuses. While all campuses belonged to the same institution, they each maintained distinct characteristics that hindered the creation of a unified institutional environment. The lack of cohesion among the campuses made it difficult for students from different faculties, spread across various locations, to interact and collaborate effectively. This fragmentation not only affected the sense of community but also hampered academic and social exchange opportunities. Furthermore, the disjointed nature of campus activities and events exacerbated the problem. Each campus often organized its own set of events, which could be exclusive to students based on their campus affiliation. This approach created barriers to participation for students from other campuses. It limited their ability to engage fully in the university experience. As a result, students missed out on valuable opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, cultural exchange, and social interaction.

Additionally, some participants made references to efforts worldwide to enhance the strength of universities by merging institutions with distinct identities. However, they

found it intriguing that even within Türkiye, there was a tendency to separate university to different campuses rather than consolidate them. This observation underscored a broader trend in higher education administration. The consolidation of university campuses could be viewed as a strategy to streamline resources and improve efficiency in some regions. Furthermore, it prompted reflection on the potential implications of such decisions for the overall effectiveness and competitiveness of universities. Ultimately, the choice between consolidation and separation of campuses reflected the complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors that influenced higher education policy and practice.

Inadequacy in social opportunities of campus. Participants noted that the entertainment and social events organized by universities were typically confined to the beginning of the academic year or to specific periods. These events which often featured local artists failed to meet student expectations. However, due to the scarcity of social events throughout the year, students still appreciated the existence of these limited events. This finding highlighted a significant issue in the timing and variety of social activities offered by universities. Concentrating social events at the start of the academic year or during specific periods created long stretches without organized activities. It led to a lack of continuous engagement and opportunities for students to socialize and unwind. To better meet student needs, universities should consider distributing social events more evenly throughout the academic year. This approach would provide regular opportunities for students to engage in campus life, helping to maintain a vibrant and connected community. Additionally, diversifying the types of events and including a wider range of performers and activities could enhance the appeal and relevance of these events.

On university campuses, facilities for sports such as football, basketball, volleyball were generally available to students. However, participants reported that their use of these facilities was sometimes hindered by the lack of equipment or sports gear. Despite these occasional challenges, students typically had access to these amenities. In universities with a Faculty of Sports Sciences, practical sports classes required the use of these fields and facilities, which could limit access for students from other faculties. Furthermore, the limited access for students outside the Faculty of Sports Sciences pointed to a potential inequity in the distribution of resources. Practical sports

classes taking precedence over general student use created barriers. This was because of reducing opportunities for non-sports majors to engage in physical activities. To address this, universities could consider implementing scheduling systems that allocated specific times for general student use, ensuring fair access for all. Balancing the needs of specialized programs with those of the broader student population was essential.

Participants noted that the events were generally focused on academic and cultural conferences. The selected topics and content sometimes failed to capture the students' interest. Due to the limited number of these events, the resulting high demand often led to a lack of available space. This finding highlighted several issues in the organization of university events. First, the infrequent scheduling of events led to overcrowding and limited availability, which was be frustrating for students who wished to attend. This scarcity suggested a need for more regular and diverse event offerings to accommodate the interests of a wider range of students. Second, the focus on academic and cultural conferences, while valuable, did not resonate with all students. Introducing a variety of event types, such as social gatherings, entertainment, and recreational activities could enhance student engagement.

Additionally, some events were chosen based on themes that catered to specific ideological perspectives. Participants mentioned that these ideologically aligned events did not attract the broader student body’s attention. They complained about the continuous invitation of guest speakers and artists who seemed to represent certain ideological viewpoints. This feedback suggested a concern among students regarding the perceived lack of diversity in the perspectives presented at university events. The repeated presence of speakers and artists associated with specific ideologies may led to feelings of exclusion among students with differing viewpoints. This contributed to a sense of ideological bias within the university's social and academic environment. To address this issue, universities might consider diversifying their selection of guest speakers and artists to include a wider range of perspectives. By doing so, they could foster a more inclusive atmosphere that encouraged open dialogue and critical thinking. Ensuring that events reflected a variety of viewpoints could help create a more balanced and engaging university experience for all students.

On the other hand, participants generally emphasized the importance of spring festivals, which were commonly associated with university life. They noted that such festivals were not organized at their universities. Even in institutions that do hold spring festivals, the events failed to meet student expectations, resulting in a lackluster experience. Students hoped for these festivals to be a time of relaxation before finals and to capture the vibrant spirit traditionally associated with such events. This finding underscored a significant gap between student desires and university event planning. Spring festivals were more than just social gatherings; they served as a crucial outlet for students to de-stress and celebrate the end of the academic year. The absence of these festivals or their failure to live up to expectations led to a diminished sense of community and university spirit. To address this, universities should consider reinvigorating their approach to spring festivals. This could involve actively seeking student input during the planning stages to ensure the events reflect their interests and needs. Incorporating a diverse array of activities, entertainment, and themes could help rejuvenate these festivals, making them more appealing and engaging. Moreover, fostering an inclusive atmosphere where all students felt welcome and represented could enhance the overall experience.

Another significant observation was that the responsibility for organizing social and cultural events in universities often lied not with the universities themselves, but with the Youth Centers operating under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Youth Centers had offices either within the campuses or adjacent to them. They offered a wide range of social and cultural opportunities, from folk dance and sign language classes to theater and painting courses. Participants generally experienced social and cultural activities through these Youth Centers rather than directly through the university. This finding revealed a dual perspective among students. Many participants appreciated the activities provided by the Youth Centers. However, some participants criticized the universities for not taking on this responsibility themselves. They argued that the universities should be directly involved in organizing these events.

From an academic standpoint, this situation highlighted a potential misalignment in the roles and responsibilities within the higher education ecosystem. Universities were not only centers of academic learning but also pivotal in fostering a holistic development environment, which included social and cultural growth. By relying on

external Youth Centers, universities might be missing an opportunity to strengthen their own community and campus culture. To address this, universities could consider taking a more proactive role in organizing social and cultural events. This could involve developing partnerships with the Youth Centers while still maintaining a significant degree of involvement and oversight. Such an approach would ensure that the activities were seamlessly integrated into the university's overall mission and environment. Moreover, universities could tailor these events more closely to the specific interests and needs of their student body. This shift could enhance the sense of community, belonging, and engagement among students. In summary, while the Youth Centers provided valuable services, a balanced approach where universities also took significant responsibility for social and cultural activities might better serve the holistic development of students.

Secure environment of campus. Participants clearly indicated that they generally perceived their campuses as safe environments. The rigorous checks of student IDs by security personnel at campus entrances effectively prevented individuals without university affiliations from entering. This contributed to students feeling secure within the campus premises. This finding underscored the importance of robust security measures in fostering a safe and conducive learning environment. The presence of vigilant security personnel and strict access controls not only deterred potential intruders but also reassured students about their safety on campus. Feeling safe was a fundamental aspect of student wellbeing.

Changing conditions in transportation to campus. Participants reported varied experiences regarding campus accessibility by highlighting the significant impact of campus location. Campuses situated far from city centers posed challenges for students. It resulted in substantial time lost during commutes. This distance also impeded the transformation of these campuses into vibrant and living communities. Additionally, students noted inadequate public transportation services to these remote campuses characterized by long queues and infrequent schedules. This finding underlined the critical role of accessibility in shaping student experiences and campus life. Proximity to urban areas facilitated easier commutes and fostered greater engagement in campus activities. When campuses were located far from city amenities, the time and effort required to travel can discourage students from

participating fully in university life. This geographical isolation prevented campuses from developing into lively, interactive environments that supported academic and social growth.

In addition, even in smaller cities where transportation issues might not be expected, challenges could still arise occasionally. Particularly, the construction of KYK dormitories far from the campus complicated access to campus. The use of public transportation vehicles that made stops within the city before reaching the campuses exacerbated traffic congestion. This observation highlighted the need for proactive measures to address transportation challenges. The construction of student accommodations at a significant distance from academic facilities created a disconnect in transportation networks. The absence of express routes directly to campuses further compounded these challenges, as students contended with traffic delays and extended travel times.

The issues related to public transportation further exacerbated these challenges. Inadequate services including long waiting times and infrequent trips led to frustration and decreased attendance in both academic and extracurricular activities. Reliable and efficient public transportation was essential for ensuring that all students had equitable access to campus resources and opportunities. To address these concerns, universities and local governments should consider collaborating to improve transportation infrastructure and services. Enhancing public transit routes, increasing the frequency of services, and reducing wait times could significantly improve the accessibility of remote campuses. Additionally, universities could explore alternative solutions such as shuttle services to bridge the gap between campuses and urban centers.

Inactive student clubs. Participants noted that university websites and promotional materials often highlighted the presence of numerous student clubs spanning a wide range of interests. However, they expressed that these student clubs often existed only in name, with minimal or no participation in activities throughout the academic year. Participants emphasized the limited engagement of these groups with some universities hosting fewer active student clubs than one can count on one hand. Additionally, while some of these student clubs organized various events, they

sometimes operated in a closed-loop manner, primarily catering to their existing members rather than actively attracting new students.

The lack of visible activity in these clubs might stems from the absence or limited availability of dedicated spaces or offices for them. Students did not have centralized locations where they could easily access and coordinate with campus community. This observation showed the importance of providing adequate resources and infrastructure to support student clubs. Having designated spaces where student clubs met, planed events, and engaged with members could foster a sense of belonging and encouraged active participation. Without such facilities, students might struggle to connect with these groups. To address this issue, universities should prioritize the allocation of spaces specifically designed for student clubs. These spaces should be centrally located, easily accessible, and equipped with the necessary amenities to support a variety of activities and meetings. By investing in these resources, universities could empower students to take ownership of their extracurricular experiences and cultivate a vibrant and engaged campus community.

In addition, some student clubs tended to deviate from their initial purpose highlighted a common challenge in these organizations. When student clubs were initially established around shared interests or themes, there was sometimes a surge of enthusiasm and dedication among members. However, over time, maintaining that focus could become difficult, especially if there was a lack of clear direction or leadership. One contributing factor to this drift might be the absence of active guidance or mentorship within the student club. Without proper guidance, members might struggle to sustain the momentum and relevance of the club's activities. Additionally, the lack of effective leadership can lead to a disorganized approach to club events and initiatives, further exacerbating the issue. Another factor to consider was the presence of financial constraints. Financial challenges restricted their ability to execute activities aligned with their original purpose. In such cases, members might resort to simpler, low-cost activities like casual social gatherings as a way to maintain the club's presence without exceeding financial limitations. To address these challenges, it was essential for student clubs to establish clear goals and objectives from the outset. Regular meetings and discussions could help ensure that members stayed aligned with

the club's mission and vision. Additionally, seeking external funding or sponsorship opportunities could alleviate financial constraints.

On the other hand, students sometimes felt hesitant to participate in student clubs due to concerns about the dominant ideologies and approaches of certain groups. Moreover, some students worried that focusing too much on extracurricular activities might detract from their academic success. It led them to question the value of involvement in student clubs. Consequently, they viewed student clubs as a waste of time. This apprehension reflected a broader issue regarding the perceived balance between academic pursuits and extracurricular involvement. Students struggled to find the right balance between academic responsibilities and engagement in student clubs. They feared that excessive involvement in the latter might detract from their academic performance.

This observation raised questions about the effectiveness and inclusivity of student clubs within universities. The lack of active involvement and outreach to attract new members suggested a need for reevaluation and restructuring. Student clubs played a crucial role in fostering community engagement, personal development, and campus vibrancy. However, if these student organizations remained insular and failed to reach out to a broader student body, they risked becoming isolated and disconnected from the wider campus community.

Framing communication within academic departments. The finding suggested that the limited interaction among participants from different faculties and departments stemmed from the absence of environments that bring students together across academic disciplines. Participants noted that even elective courses were often tailored exclusively to their own departments with few opportunities for cross-disciplinary engagement. Furthermore, the scarcity of campus-wide social activities compounded this lack of interaction. This situation could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, academic structures might contribute to siloed interactions with students primarily engaging with peers and instructors within their own departments. Additionally, administrative barriers or logistical challenges might hinder the implementation of cross-disciplinary courses or events. Moreover, the absence of initiatives to promote

interdisciplinary collaboration could perpetuate the existing division among students from various disciplines.

To address this issue, it was crucial to foster a more inclusive campus environment that encouraged interaction and collaboration across academic boundaries. This could be achieved through the development of interdisciplinary courses, workshops, and extracurricular activities. They could attract participants from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, promoting awareness and appreciation of different fields of study could help break down barriers. Furthermore, establishing platforms for networking and knowledge exchange such as interdisciplinary clubs or discussion forums could facilitate organic interactions among students in different departments. By creating opportunities for meaningful engagement outside of their respective departments, universities could enrich the overall learning experience and promote a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation.

4.2.1.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

It can be categorized as (I) financial challenges, (II) strengths and weaknesses for accommodation, and (III) strengths and weaknesses for nutrition.

Financial challenges. Participants highlighted the increasingly challenging economic circumstances they face during their university years. They noted that by listening to the experiences of those who attended university in earlier periods, the magnitude of this economic hardship became even more apparent. Students expressed difficulties in meeting their basic needs, with the continuous fluctuations and rising costs exacerbating their financial struggles. Particularly noteworthy was the trend of prices steadily increasing, adding layers of complexity to these economic challenges. The findings suggested a concerning trend of escalating economic hardship experienced by students since the commencement of their university education. This trend could be attributed to various factors including the rising cost of living and other educational expenses. Additionally, economic instability and fluctuating market conditions contributes to the uncertainty and financial strain faced by students.

Many participants in the study rely on KYK loans, with a significant portion of these funds being allocated towards covering hostel expenses. Despite this financial

assistance from the government, participants found the loans insufficient even for meeting their basic daily needs. This highlighted a systemic issue with the current state-funded loan system. It suggested a need for reassessment and potential adjustments to better align with students' financial realities. They often supplement their finances with support from their families. However, due to fluctuating and increasing prices, the economic support from their families became inadequate over time. This reflected broader economic challenges facing families in Türkiye. It indicated a need for broader economic policies to address inflation.

Participants hesitated to ask for additional financial support from their families to avoid further straining them financially and to support siblings pursuing education at different levels. This reluctance highlighted the complex familial dynamics and the sense of responsibility students fell towards their families. Additionally, the transition to adulthood added a psychological burden to requesting money from their families, as it made them feel guilty and uncomfortable. This observation shed light on the emotional toll of financial dependence and the societal stigma associated with asking for financial assistance.

Furthermore, some participants mentioned that they worked in jobs such as waitressing, cashiering, or sales consulting to avoid being an economic burden on their families. However, they tended not to share these experiences with their families. Some expressed reluctance to disclose their work to their families because they feared it would sadden them to learn that their children were working due to economic difficulties. Others worried that their families would be upset about their situation and feared that it would disrupt their university lives. These findings highlighted the complex emotions and concerns students faced regarding financial independence and familial relationships. The reluctance to share their work experiences with their families underscored the pressure students felt to maintain a facade of independence. It also reflected the stigma associated with economic hardship and the desire to shield loved ones from distressing realities. This reluctance might further isolate students and prevent them from seeking emotional support from their families. This exacerbated the psychological burden of financial strain.

To sum up, the findings underscored the importance of addressing these economic challenges to ensure that all students had equal opportunities to pursue higher education without being unduly burdened by financial constraints. Implementing policies and support mechanisms to alleviate financial pressure such as scholarships, grants, and affordable housing options was crucial in promoting equitable access to education. Additionally, initiatives aimed at improving financial literacy and providing resources for managing personal finances could empower students to navigate economic challenges more effectively.

Strengths and weaknesses for accommodation. Initially, sharing living spaces with individuals from diverse backgrounds in KYK dormitories posed a challenge for students accustomed to living with their families. The experience of cohabiting with others who had different priorities and perspectives on cleanliness and organization initially created tensions. However, over time, the necessity to coexist in a shared environment prompted students to adapt and find common ground. The recognition of everyone's unique preferences and the willingness to compromise fostered a sense of harmony and cooperation among dormitory residents. Despite the adjustment to communal living, participants still struggled with the lack of personal space. The absence of privacy and the constant presence of others in shared living quarters presented ongoing challenges for students. This difficulty in acclimating to the absence of a dedicated private space underscored the importance of autonomy and personal boundaries in fostering a sense of comfort and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the experience of living in KYK dormitories highlighted the broader societal shift from familial to communal living arrangements. While communal living fostered social interaction and mutual support, it also required individuals to navigate the complexities of shared spaces and negotiate boundaries with others. Overall, the experience of living in KYK dormitories underscores the importance of flexibility, compromise, and resilience in adapting to new living arrangements. While communal living offered opportunities for social connection and personal growth, it also presented challenges that require individuals to cultivate understanding, empathy, and cooperation to foster a harmonious living environment.

The primary concerns regarding KYK dormitories revolved around the strict regulations governing residents' lives and routines. Firstly, the rigid entry and exit times imposed by the dormitory management hindered individuals' ability to socialize, engage in group studies, or spend time with friends. Secondly, the prohibition on using electric appliances such as coffee makers and kettles in dormitory rooms further restricted students' comfort zones. Participants emphasized that these stringent rules exacerbated the challenges of student life, yet they struggled to understand the underlying reasons behind these regulations. The imposition of strict entry and exit times reflected a paternalistic approach aimed at maintaining discipline and order within the dormitory environment. However, this approach failed to recognize the diverse needs and lifestyles of students, inhibiting their ability to engage in social activities and academic pursuits outside of designated hours. Furthermore, the prohibition on using electric appliances in dormitory rooms might stem from safety concerns or the desire to minimize energy consumption. Nevertheless, this restriction disregarded students' autonomy and comfort. It limited their ability to create a conducive living environment conducive to their needs and preferences.

Overall, the imposition of stringent regulations in KYK dormitories highlighted a disconnect between the management's objectives and students' lived experiences. While the rules might be intended to promote discipline and safety, they inadvertently hindered students' ability to lead fulfilling and comfortable lives within the dormitory setting. To address these concerns, it was essential for dormitory management to adopt a more collaborative approach. They should take into account students' perspectives and needs, fostering a supportive and inclusive living environment conducive to academic success and individual wellbeing.

The motivation behind some participants opting to move into student homes stemmed from the initial apprehension of living with strangers in dormitories and concerned about the lack of conducive study routines. On the other hand, students who experienced dormitory life often chose to move into student homes due to the stringent rules in dormitories. However, economic factors, particularly rising prices, made this option challenging for this minority group of students. The costs associated with rent, apartment maintenance fees, kitchen expenses, as well as utility bills for electricity, water, and gas, became burdensome. Additionally, the limited budget of students led

them to seek cheaper accommodations. It resulted in apartments with various issues such as water leaks, poor insulation, and inadequate isolation. The decision to move into student homes reflected a desire for autonomy and a conducive environment for studying, away from the constraints of dormitory regulations. However, the financial strain associated with apartment living underscored the broader economic challenges facing students and their limited options in navigating affordable housing options. Moreover, the prevalence of issues such as water leaks and poor insulation in cheaper apartments highlighted the trade-offs students must make between affordability and living conditions.

For those who continued to reside in their family homes, their lives often mirrored their experiences in high school. The household chores and responsibilities were typically carried out by family members. It maintained a status quo where all domestic tasks remained within the purview of family members. This observation underscored the continuation of a familiar dynamic. This dynamic fostered a sense of security and stability for individuals living in their family homes, as they were accustomed to the support and care provided by their families. However, it also perpetuated a dependency on familial structures, hindering the development of independence and self-sufficiency among individuals. Additionally, the continuation of traditional gender roles within the household reinforced gender stereotypes and inequalities. It could impact individuals' perceptions of gender roles and expectations in broader society.

Strengths and weaknesses for nutrition. Despite the generally repetitive cycle of meal offerings in university cafeterias, students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the quality and content of the food. Participants appreciated that, while the menu not be highly varied, the meals provided consistently meet standards of taste, nutrition, and overall quality. This consistent quality was crucial in ensuring that students had access to reliable and nutritious food options at least in university cafeteria.

In addition, they emphasized the advantageous price-performance ratio of the meals. Participants consistently noted that the meals available in university cafeterias were significantly more economical compared to similar offerings in the external market. This substantial cost-effectiveness was crucial, particularly in the current economic climate where students often faced financial constraints. The affordability of university

cafeteria meals allowed students to manage their budgets more effectively. Thus, they could access nutritious and high-quality food without financial strain. Additionally, this economic benefit extended beyond mere cost savings. It contributed to reduce food insecurity and allowing them to focus more on their studies. The university cafeterias' ability to deliver high-quality meals at lower prices highlighted their essential role in the academic ecosystem. This finding revealed the importance of maintaining and possibly expanding such services to continue supporting student welfare comprehensively.

On the other hand, the study revealed overwhelmingly negative experiences among participants regarding the food services in KYK dormitories. Nearly all participants reported dissatisfaction due to the repetitive nature of the meals, cold serving temperatures, small portion sizes, and the presence of foreign materials in the food, which raised significant hygiene concerns. These issues contributed to a general reluctance among students to eat in the KYK dormitories. However, the high prices of food in the external market often compelled students to use these services despite their reservations. Furthermore, the study highlighted specific issues related to dormitories managed by private companies through tender processes. These privatized services seemed to suffer from inadequate monitoring, leading to the persistent problems reported by the participants. The findings underscored the need for improved quality control and regulatory oversight to ensure that the food services in KYK dormitories met acceptable standards of hygiene, nutrition and variety.

The study indicated that participants found the prices of cafes and canteens within the campus as excessively high. This sentiment underscored a critical need for price regulation and oversight to ensure affordability. Students expected that services catering specifically to them within the campus should be more economical compared to external markets, considering their financial constraints and the academic setting. The high prices not only strained students' budgets but also undermined the supportive role that on-campus facilities. By providing more affordable dining options, universities could better support students' financial wellbeing. Therefore, the findings suggested that implementing stringent price controls and regular monitoring of campus food service providers was essential. This would ensure that the prices were kept in check and remained aligned with students' financial capacities.

4.2.1.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

It can be categorized as (I) lack of student voice in university administration, (II) bureaucratic challenges and (III) dominance of university administrators on virtual face of universities.

Lack of student voice in university administration. The study revealed a strong consensus among participants that the true essence of a university lied in its students. Participants emphasized that students' expectations and demands should be adequately addressed by university administration, as students were the primary stakeholders and the true proprietors of the institution. They argued that without students, the university's identity and structure would lose their significance. This sentiment showed the necessity for universities to prioritize student engagement and representation in decision-making processes. By acknowledging and integrating students' voices, universities could ensure that their policies and practices were aligned with the needs and aspirations of their student body. The findings highlighted the importance of fostering a student-centered approach in university governance. This approach not only enhanced the educational experience but also reinforced the university's role as a dynamic and responsive institution. Ultimately, the active participation of students in university governance was crucial for maintaining the relevance and vitality of the university community.

Participants acknowledged the presence of mechanisms such as request and feedback forms and direct messaging to the rector on university websites. While they seemed to intended to give students a voice, there were significant doubts about their effectiveness. Students expressed skepticism regarding the functionality of these platforms. They noted a lack of tangible responses to their requests and concerns. This perceived lack of responsiveness led to the belief that these participation initiatives were largely superficial and did not genuinely facilitate student participation in university governance. The findings suggested that for these mechanisms to be meaningful, universities needed to ensure that student feedback was not only solicited but also acted upon in a transparent manner. Demonstrating concrete examples of how student input influenced decisions would enhance trust and validate the students' role in shaping university policies. Therefore, improving the transparency and

accountability of these feedback systems was crucial for fostering genuine student engagement. In that way, they ensured that their contributions had a real impact on the university's operations and decision-making processes.

Bureaucratic challenges. University students often found themselves struggling with bureaucratic processes as part of their academic journey. According to feedback from participants, they frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the complexity and length of these procedures when attempting to undertake various initiatives. These initiatives were such as organizing events, forming clubs, or inviting guest speakers. Students reported that these administrative hurdles posed significant barriers to actively participating in and enhancing their university experience. Participants highlighted that the bureaucratic processes involved in planning and executing extracurricular activities were often cumbersome and time-consuming. They noted that the approval process for events or new clubs could be particularly challenging, involving multiple layers of approval and extensive documentation. This complexity discouraged many students from pursuing potentially enriching activities.

Overall, participants advocated for the minimization of these bureaucratic obstacles to facilitate a more dynamic and engaged campus life. Universities should aim to cultivate environments that encourage intellectual curiosity, collaboration, and proactive engagement. By minimizing bureaucratic hurdles, universities could foster a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere. The feedback from university students underscored the importance of reducing bureaucratic obstacles to nurture a vibrant and active university community. They believed this approach would enhance student engagement and align with the overarching mission of higher education institutions.

Dominance of university administrators on virtual face of universities. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the dominant visibility of university administrators on official websites and social media platforms. They criticized the emphasis on institutional representation and the personal use of social media accounts by university officials. They found the current approach of using official channels primarily for showcasing administrative activities such as official visits, meetings with dignitaries, and interactions with government officials as irrelevant and opaque. This virtual facade tended to overshadow the voices and perspectives of students, who were

regarded as the true owners of the university. Students questioned why their presence was not more prominently featured in the virtual representation of the university. Thus, they advocated for greater transparency and authenticity in online communications. They emphasized the need for sharing content that highlighted the university's academic achievements and progress, showcasing its journey and evolution within the academic landscape. By doing so, universities could foster a sense of inclusivity and ownership among students while providing a more accurate portrayal of their institutional identity and values on digital platforms.

4.2.2. Interpretative Cross-Case Findings

In this section, for descriptive cross-case findings, the researcher's interpretations regarding the six fundamental categories of student engagement are included. Through a more interpretative approach, this analysis tries to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of student engagement in universities.

4.2.2.1. Environment of University

Understanding student engagement is essential for fostering a fulfilling university experience. The factors regarding environment of university include student characteristics (academic and social expectations, familial aspects), city characteristics (the social and cultural context of the university's location city, economic viability), university characteristics (institutional structure and diversity issues), and impacts of ideological and religious aspects.

Student characteristics. Student characteristics can be categorized under academic and social expectations, as well as familial aspects in the scope of student engagement. Firstly, students in Türkiye enter university with high expectations for both academic and social development, viewing it as a transformative period. They anticipate a break from the monotony of high school, expecting universities to offer diverse opportunities for intellectual growth and social interaction. However, these expectations are often unmet due to homogeneous student bodies and limited social diversity, particularly in less competitive programs. This mismatch can diminish students' engagement. Secondly, family pressure significantly influences students' university choices, steering them toward fields perceived as more secure and prestigious, such as health

sciences, engineering, and law. This pressure often overrides personal interests. It leads to decisions driven by the desire for job stability and financial security. Such familial influence hinders genuine engagement, as students may struggle to connect with fields, they did not choose out of passion but out of obligation.

City characteristics. City characteristics can be categorized under social and cultural context of city, as well as economic viability in terms of student engagement. Firstly, the social and cultural environment of the university's location plays a crucial role in shaping student engagement. In smaller cities, limited social opportunities negatively affect the overall university experience, leading to student disengagement. Conversely, larger cities offer a rich array of cultural and recreational activities, enhancing students' social and academic engagement. This disparity highlights how the urban setting can either bolster or impede student engagement. It depends on the available social and cultural resources. Another aspect regarding city characteristics under student engagement is economic viability. Financial constraints force many students to choose universities closer to home. It limits their options and potentially leads to disengagement with their academic choices. The economic viability of different cities influences students' ability to fully engage with university life, as those in economically disadvantaged areas may face additional financial burdens that hinder their educational experience. This economic factor underscores the complexity of student engagement. It is deeply intertwined with financial stability and access to resources.

University characteristics. University characteristics can be categorized under institutional structure of university and diversity issues in university. Firstly, the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye face challenges in gaining credibility and meeting student expectations. Students at these institutions often have tempered expectations regarding the quality of education and opportunities available. Despite recognizing the potential for growth, they are skeptical about their universities' ability to compete with well-established universities. This skepticism dampens student engagement, as students feel less invested in an institution that they perceive as lacking in prestige and resources. Secondly, universities typically attract students from surrounding regions, which does not contribute to diversity. The limited variety of perspectives creates a barrier to social engagement for students. This lack of diversity

means students are often interacting with peers who share similar backgrounds and viewpoints. It reduces the opportunity for exposure to new ideas and experiences. Consequently, the homogeneity within the student body hinders the development of a vibrant and inclusive social environment. It is essential for social engagement.

Impact of ideological and religious pressures. In smaller cities, dominant ideological and religious views can create an unwelcoming environment for university students. Students often feel marginalized and pressured to conform to local norms, which stifles their ability to express their own beliefs and opinions. The perceived alignment of universities with specific ideological viewpoints further exacerbates this issue, undermining academic freedom and the diversity of thought. These pressures significantly impact student engagement, as they navigate a constrained and often inhospitable academic and social landscape.

In summary, enhancing student engagement in Turkish universities requires addressing contextual factors of city and universities, economic disparities, supporting students against familial and societal pressures. Universities should foster inclusive environments, ensuring that all students can engage in university environment socially and academically.

4.2.2.2. University in terms of Academic Engagement

The factors regarding academic engagement include faculty shortages and their impact, teaching strategies and course content, career preparation, employment concerns, adaptation to online teaching, and balancing academic and personal development.

Faculty shortages. The findings from the study reveal significant insights into academic engagement within Turkish universities. One critical issue is the shortage of academic staff, which forces faculty members to teach outside their areas of expertise. This situation undermines the quality of education, as students struggle to grasp complex concepts without adequate guidance. Addressing this issue through strategic recruitment and retention of faculty is essential to enhance academic engagement.

Teaching strategies and course content. The reliance on homogenous teaching strategies and a heavy emphasis on theoretical courses limit student engagement.

Lecture-based methods and a lack of practical learning opportunities make learning less dynamic and relevant. Incorporating diverse teaching methods and integrating more practical approaches, theoretical concepts more tangible and engaging for students.

Career preparation. The perception of universities as institutions for career development significantly affects students' motivation to pursue higher education. Viewing university education as an investment for future employment leads students to focus primarily on career development. As a result, students potentially neglect other aspects of personal growth. This focus limits participation in extracurricular activities and prevent students from experiencing a rich university life. The intensity of career preparation makes it challenging for students to balance academic and social engagement.

Employment concerns. Employment and employability concerns heavily shape students' academic engagement. University students prioritize career preparation over acquiring a broader education, focusing on skills and knowledge directly applicable to job prospects. This shift in focus diminishes their engagement with the full spectrum of university education. As a result, it leads to a more transactional approach to learning. Additionally, the reputation and perceived quality of universities, especially those established after the 2000s, play a role in students' employment concerns, influencing their level of engagement.

Adaptation to online teaching. The rapid shift to online teaching exposed significant gaps in preparedness among students. Traditional teaching methods often proved ineffective in the online environment. It highlights the need for tailored strategies to maintain student engagement. Addressing technological disparities and adapting teaching methods to suit online platforms are essential for sustaining academic engagement in remote learning settings.

Balancing academic and personal development. The predominantly academic focus of university life often leaves students feeling that their broader personal development needs are unmet. Balancing academic rigor with opportunities for social engagement and personal growth is crucial for creating a holistic university experience. Enhancing

internationalization efforts and providing meaningful opportunities for language development can also significantly improve academic engagement.

In summary, improving academic engagement in Turkish universities requires addressing career and employment issues, faculty shortages, diversifying teaching methods, adapting to online teaching, and promoting a balanced university life.

4.2.2.3. University in terms of Psychological Engagement

The factors regarding psychological engagement include development of individual autonomy and responsibility, gender and family pressure, stressors affecting psychological wellbeing, and future anxiety.

Development of individual autonomy and responsibility. The development of personal autonomy is fundamental to psychological engagement. Before entering university, student rely heavily on their families. It limits their interactions with the outside world and hindered their autonomy. The transition to university forces students to manage tasks independently. This newfound independence and responsibility are crucial for enhancing students' psychological engagement, as students develop the confidence to navigate their academic and personal lives.

Gender and family pressure. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping university students' engagement, especially for female students. The stricter supervision and pressure from families that many female students experience hinder their participation in extracurricular activities, social events, and even academic opportunities. This gender-based restriction leads to a lower level of engagement and a sense of isolation. As a result, it impacts their overall university experience.

Stressors affecting psychological wellbeing. Several stressors, such as exam pressure, financial difficulties and superficial relationships profoundly impact students' psychological engagement. The stress from exams and maintaining high GPAs can lead to anxiety and burnout. It affects students' ability to engage fully with their studies. Financial challenges add another layer of stress, as students struggle to manage their expenses. Superficial relationships, often formed out of convenience rather than genuine connection, can lead to feelings of isolation and emotional instability.

Addressing these stressors through comprehensive support systems is essential for maintaining psychological engagement.

Future anxiety. Concerns about future employment and financial independence create significant anxiety among students, impacting their psychological engagement. The competitive job market and economic uncertainties make students focus heavily on their academic performance, often neglecting their personal wellbeing. Additionally, fear of repercussions for expressing social and political beliefs further limits their psychological engagement, as they may feel restricted in participating openly in campus life. Creating a supportive and inclusive campus culture that values academic freedom and expression is crucial for reducing future anxiety and enhancing psychological engagement.

In summary, to boost psychological engagement in Turkish universities, it is important to: encourage students to become more independent, provide support to reduce foster a sense of community, to address stress and anxiety through comprehensive support.

4.2.2.4. University in terms of Social Engagement

The factors regarding social engagement include social environment and diversity, campus life and sense of community, campus services and activities, and social interaction.

Campus life and sense of community. The lack of a cohesive campus life, often due to separated campus buildings, distinctly defines students' academic and social engagement. The separation of campuses within a university often hinders social and academic engagement. When campuses are fragmented, students from different faculties and locations find it difficult to interact and collaborate effectively. This lack of cohesion not only affects the sense of community but also limits opportunities for academic and social exchange.

Campus services and activities. The range of academic, social, and psychological services offered by campuses is a contributing factor to student engagement. A limited number of academic activities, such as seminars and conferences and social activities, such as student clubs leads to lower engagement levels. Students benefit from a rich

array of activities and support services that enhance their university experience. It would promote a more active and engaged student body.

Social interaction. The interaction patterns among students within the university significantly impact social engagement. A scattered campus layout, the inactivity of student clubs, and the lack of activities that bring together different faculties and students negatively affect social engagement. These factors hinder the development of a cohesive and interactive student community. It is essential for fostering meaningful connections and enhancing overall student engagement. Addressing these issues by promoting more integrated and active student activities can significantly improve social engagement on campus.

In summary, enhancing social engagement in universities requires addressing the separation of campuses, increasing the frequency and diversity of social activities, improving campus accessibility and safety, supporting active student clubs, and encouraging interdisciplinary interactions.

4.2.2.5. Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

Financial hardship and resource allocation as well as need to focus on accommodation and nutrition are important for enhancing student engagement for the universities.

Financial hardship and resource allocation. Financial hardship and limited resource allocation are critical factors affecting university students' academic, psychological and social engagement. Students facing financial difficulties struggle to afford textbooks, technology, and other educational resources. It hinders their academic performance. Moreover, financial stress impacts their mental health and social interactions. It causes to reduce their overall engagement and participation in university activities. In addition, geographical proximity significantly impacts university students' engagement, particularly due to financial constraints and the socioeconomic status of their families. Students who live farther from the university or come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often face higher travel costs and additional financial burdens. This limits their ability to participate in on-campus activities, attend classes regularly, and engage fully with the academic and social aspects of university life.

Need to focus on accommodation and nutrition. Accommodation conditions affects student engagement negatively or positively. KYK dormitories challenges students' engagement due to differing cleanliness standards and lack of personal space. Strict regulations in dormitories hinder social interactions and autonomy, which results in reducing engagement. On the other hand, satisfaction with affordable meals in university cafeterias enhances engagement, while dissatisfaction with dormitory food services due to hygiene and portion issues decreases student engagement. Overall, balancing supportive communal living with flexibility and improved amenities supports student engagement.

In summary, addressing financial hardship, improving resource allocation, and enhancing accommodation and nutrition are crucial for developing student engagement at universities.

4.2.2.6. University in terms of Political Engagement

The factors affecting political engagement of university students are lack of student voice in university governance and dominance of university administrators in digital presence.

Lack of student voice in university governance. The lack of student representation in university decision-making processes significantly reduces political engagement. When students feel their expectations and demands are ignored, their motivation to participate in university governance diminishes. This disengagement undermines the sense of ownership and involvement crucial for a vibrant and responsive university community. Bureaucratic obstacles in extracurricular activities further discourage participation. Additionally, the overwhelming online presence of administrators overshadows students, making them feel disconnected. Addressing these issues by simplifying procedures and featuring student achievements can foster engaged campus community.

Dominance of university administrators in digital presence. The overwhelming digital presence of university administrators reduces student engagement. When official platforms prioritize the activities of university leaders over student voices, it creates a disconnect. This perceived lack of transparency and relevance in

communication diminishes students' interest in participating in university affairs. As a result, it lowers political engagement of university students.

By considering these factors, universities can develop strategies to enhance student engagement, ensuring a more inclusive, supportive, and enriching environment for all university students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter covers discussions and implications related to this study. Firstly, a brief summary of the results of research question is provided along with the literature review and previous research. Then, discussion of the results, implications for theory and practice as well as recommendations for further research are presented in this chapter.

5.1. Discussion of the Results

This section provides a discussion of the cross-case results with the theoretical base of the study. This section comprises of six parts. These six parts include discussions on cross-case results of environment of university, cross-case results of academic engagement, cross-case results of psychological engagement, cross-case results of social engagement, cross-case results of financial issues, accommodation and nutrition, and cross-case results of political engagement.

5.1.1. Discussions on Environment of University

The cross-case findings of this research indicate that student engagement in higher education is influenced not only within the institution but also by the broader environment of the university. This result is not surprising in the sense that many researchers pointed out student engagement is shaped by pre-university characteristics such as previous experiences, expectations, financial status, and field of study (Astin, 1985, 1993; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Pascarella,1985; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Yebei, 2011). In a similar vein, the current research confirmed these results as student engagement is affected by environmental aspects. According to the results of this study, these environmental factors regarding student engagement are identified as *student characteristics* (academic and social expectations, familial

aspects), *city characteristics* (the social and cultural context of the university's location city, economic viability), *university characteristics* (institutional structure and diversity issues), *and impacts of ideological and religious aspects*. Therefore, to effectively enhance student engagement, it is crucial to understand these aspects in environment of university.

First, according to the findings of this study, student characteristics including pre-university expectations from university and familial pressure as emerge prominent factor within the environment of the university for student engagement. The result of this study shows that expectations of students in academic and social aspects shape their engagement in the university positively or negatively. This is parallel to the existing literature (Hassel & Ridout, 2011; Kahu, 2013; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Lowe & Cook, 2003). For example, Hassel and Ridout (2011) underlines when students enter undergraduate studies with limited or incorrect understandings of university education, it may result in reduced student engagement with both the academic and social aspects of university life. This lack of engagement can negatively impact their academic achievements, hinder their personal and social growth, and may also influence student retention rates.

In addition, students often face familial pressures during their university selection process, which significantly impacts their engagement. According to findings of this study, these familial pressures are related to financial concerns, parents' anxieties about their children's future, and the push to direct their children towards specific fields of study with better employment prospects. This finding is compatible with other scholarly works (Hu & Kuh, 2002; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Öz, 2019; Pike, 1999; Pike & Kuh, 2005a). Students' university choices are often influenced by the pressures exerted by their families, shaping their thoughts and future plans. Families often push students towards fields with better employment prospects, prioritize universities in closer locations economically, and view university graduation as a means to overcome social class barriers. The stress of university entrance exams already serves as a significant determinant in their decisions, but when compounded by familial pressure, it further complicates the process. This dual pressure can negatively impact students' engagement. It makes university life challenging for them to fully commit to their academic and social environments. Family expectations hinder their ability to develop

a genuine connection with their chosen university/department, ultimately affecting their engagement. This creates additional pressure on students, impacting their academic and social engagement.

Second, the contextual factors in relation to the city are pivotal in determining the student engagement within environment of university. According to this research, the metropolitan status of the city in which a university is located positively impacts student engagement. This is largely due to the extensive social and academic opportunities available in more urban areas. The diverse resources and activities in larger cities provide a richer environment for personal and academic growth. Even if universities may lack some amenities, the city's offerings effectively supplement these needs, fostering a more engaging student experience. This is parallel to the literature on environmental factors of student engagement in the scope of Turkish higher education (Aypay, et. al., 2012; Boyacı et al., 2018; Öz, 2019). These studies underlined the strong ties between universities and the cities they are located in in terms of student dropouts and transfers to other institutions. In addition, economic viability varies significantly between cities, profoundly impacting student engagement. Financial constraints often compel students to choose universities closer to home, thereby limiting their options and potentially reducing their engagement with their academic pursuits. In economically disadvantaged areas, students face additional financial burdens. It hinders their ability to fully engage in university life. These economic disparities highlight the crucial role of financial stability and resource access in cities to foster student engagement.

In the scope of city-university connection, Karadağ and Yücel (2024) researched student-friendly university cities of Türkiye. City satisfaction measures university students' contentment with transportation, safety, entertainment, sports, local business interactions, resident attitudes, recreational and cultural activities, and health solutions. Excluding the 11 provinces in the earthquake zone, the research found that 23 provinces had high levels of satisfaction while 47 provinces were seen as less satisfactory. In Türkiye, coastal provinces generally exhibited higher satisfaction levels (except Kastamonu and Rize). Despite being inland, Eskişehir and Ankara also had higher student satisfaction. This finding aligns with the city satisfaction results of

the cases of Rize, Ankara and Uşak included in the current study (Adıyaman case was excluded in the conducted study due to being located in an earthquake zone).

The impact of city characteristics on student engagement draws attention to universities established after 2006 under the "one university in each city" motto. This strategy may be driven by the desire to economically support cities and stimulate financial flow within them by using universities as a tool. It aligns completely with the findings of the study conducted by Çalışkan (2010) on Uşak University, which is also one of the cases in the current research. Çalışkan (2010) underlines the expenditures made by university students constitute a significant spending group that revitalizes the urban economy. Furthermore, the construction of some university faculties in dispersed campuses rather than city centers appears to be a means of generating economic activity in those districts. However, it raises concerns about the quality of higher education, as the focus on economic benefits may overshadow academic priorities and resources. This approach prioritizes the quantity of universities over quality, thereby restricting students' overall growth.

For instance, smaller cities often lack the vibrant social and recreational activities found in larger urban centers. In major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, and Eskişehir students benefit from a wide range of cultural events, sports activities, and diverse social gatherings. It contributes significantly to their social engagement. In contrast, students in smaller cities face limited access to such amenities. Therefore, instead of merely increasing the number of universities, it would be more effective to enhance the social infrastructure of cities. As claimed by Erçevik and Önal (2011), university students utilize the city for social and cultural activity areas that are not available on their campuses. In this context, university students perceive and use the city as a social and cultural space.

With a similar perspective, Larkham (2000) and Kruschwitz (2010) classify the relationship between campuses and cities in different ways. Larkham (2000) identifies three campus models: self-sufficient, colonization, and dispersed. Kruschwitz (2010), on the other hand, categorizes them as integrated with the city, affiliated with the city, and self-sufficient. According to the results of current study, Turkish universities established after the 2000s can be categorized as "dispersed" and "integrated with the

city" according to the approaches of these scholars. This is because the campuses of universities are neither physically nor socially self-sufficient and must integrate with the city. Therefore, students tend to rely on the social, cultural, and economic opportunities provided by the city in Turkish universities established after 2000s. These results show how the city can complement campus life where it falls short. It reveals that cities have significant responsibilities for supporting student life. This situation actually highlights the importance of universities maintaining constant contact with local authorities of the cities. It is necessary to offer a rich array of social and recreational activities across city to foster student engagement.

Third, the issues regarding institutional structures of universities influence student engagement. For instance, according to findings of this study, the lack of reputation and quality of universities established after the 2000s, compared to well-established universities, significantly impact student engagement. Students at the universities established after 2000s feel disengaged due to perceived lower academic standards and less recognized credentials. This is because well-established universities offer better resources, more experienced faculty, and a vibrant campus life. All contribute to a more enriching and motivating educational experience in well-established universities. In the literature, although various studies mention minimal effects of institutional structures, (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Toutkoushian & Smart, 2001), the related literature emphasizes the important roles of instructional structures on student engagement like this study (Hu & Kuh, 2002; Porter, 2006). According to these studies, in particular, factors such as size, differentiation of universities, research emphasis of the institution are found to have significant effects on student engagement.

The problems regarding student engagement in the universities established after 2000s can be associated with is the lack of institutional differentiation. These universities often lack uniqueness due to similar educational programs and campus structures. It leads to monotonous and standardized student experiences. As Kahu and Nelson (2018) suggest, factors that enhance student engagement remain weak when not supported by the diversity and originality of institutions. However, in the context of the Turkish higher education system, the isomorphism of higher education institutions rather than their differentiation has been highlighted by many researchers (Emil, 2020; Emil & Kondakçı, 2017; Karataş-Acer & Güçlü, 2017; Mızıkacı, 2010). Due to

regulatory role of CoHE and lack of historical background, the universities established after 2000s often mimic the activities of well-established ones. This isomorphism negatively impacts student engagement in these universities, as they fail to develop unique and engaging educational experiences tailored to their own students. Consequently, the lack of differentiation and innovation in these institutions hampers their ability to increase student engagement. This is parallel to the literature of differentiation of institutions in terms student engagement (Carey, 2018; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Moges et al., 2024). These studies underline that student engagement is unique and influenced by institutional realities like mission, structure, and learning environments. Each university shapes student engagement in distinct ways with their specific missions fostering unique approaches. Therefore, the universities established after 2000s need to focus on institutional differentiation to increase student engagement.

In addition, one of the cross-case results in this study is that the more universities have diversity of student profile, the more engagement of students is affected in positive way. In the context of Turkish higher education, the limited diversity in student demographics presents challenges for student engagement. The study findings suggest that students often struggle to encounter peers from different backgrounds and are less likely to be exposed to diverse thoughts and ideas. This lack of diversity negatively impacts their engagement, as they miss out on the enriching experiences that come from interacting with individuals with varied perspectives and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, engagement among students remains suboptimal due to the homogeneity within their university environments. This finding aligns with existing literature which underscores the importance of diversity and inclusion in higher education for fostering a more engaging learning experience (Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Harper et al., 2009; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Kuh et al., 2005; Tinto, 1993).

In the Turkish higher education system, a notable point is that universities established after the 2000s predominantly enroll students from the city where the university is located or from neighboring cities. It highlights a significant demographic limitation, as the student population tends to lack the diversity in these universities. In studies focused on student mobility within higher education institutions in Türkiye, it is observed that students tend to prefer universities in hometowns or located near their

hometowns (Gür, 2022; Kahraman, 2023; Şenol, 2020; Yakar et al., 2020). Similarly, Arlı (2016) underlined that student mobility between provinces, especially towards major cities, has decreased. The preference for nearby institutions results in a lack of diversity, which negatively impacts student engagement. This is because it limits exposure to different perspectives and cultural backgrounds, which are crucial for a comprehensive educational experience (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Zepke & Leach, 2010). Addressing this issue would require universities develop strategies that not only attract students in different regions but also retain students from diverse backgrounds, thereby enhancing student engagement through a more varied and inclusive environment. That means there is a need for systematic studies to understand the dynamics of inter-provincial student mobility and the reasons behind these movements in terms of enhancing student engagement.

Lastly, according to the results of this study in terms of environment of university, impacts of ideological and religious aspects in the context can be associated with student engagement. Dominant ideologies and religious groups directly or indirectly influence students' university experiences, particularly by adversely affecting students' freedom of expression. When universities are as representing specific ideological and religious approaches, it especially hinders the engagement of students with opposing views. This finding is compatible with other scholarly works (Bowman et al., 2015; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Mayhew, 2012) that only an inclusive worldview climate can result in best practices in university life.

When looked at Turkish higher education, the capacity of universities to create a welcoming environment for diverse religious and ideological perspectives appears to be limited. The findings of this study, which highlight the significant impact of ideological and religious groups on higher education as a challenge for student engagement, align with the results of research conducted by Tekerek (2023). According to Tekerek's (2023) study, universities in Türkiye function as extensions of the political power. The ideological approaches initially seen in the universities rural areas has now become firmly established in those of major cities. These ideological efforts influence academic appointments, the guest speakers for conferences, and the selected themes for university activities based on directives from the political authority. It seems to result in the provincialization of higher education across the

entire country. This is parallel to the finding of the current study. As mentioned in the findings, these dominant religious and ideological approaches negatively impact student engagement, as political interference undermines the academic integrity and inclusivity necessary for fostering a diverse educational environment.

5.1.2. Discussions on Academic Engagement

The cross-case findings of this research indicate that academic engagement plays a crucial role in undergraduate education. Academic engagement positively impacts university students by improving their academic performance and overall satisfaction with their educational experience, which is convergent to the related literature (Astin, 1993; Çalışkan, 2023; Günüç, 2013; Kuh, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). On the contrast, academic disengagement has detrimental effects on university students' lives. Disengaged students are more likely to skip classes, miss deadlines, and show a lack of interest in their studies. It leads to lower academic performance and a higher risk of dropping out. This lack of engagement result in feelings of isolation and disconnection from the university community. This result is not surprising in the sense that many researchers pointed out there are critical factors for academic engagement such as academic challenge (Gonyea & Kinzie, 2015; Kuh et al., 2005, Lewis & Smith, 1993; NSSE, 2019), learning with peers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, faculty-student interaction (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella &Terenzini, 2005). In a similar vein, the current research confirmed these results as student engagement is affected by academic aspects. According to the results of this study, these factors regarding student engagement are focused on *faculty* (faculty shortages and specialization of faculty, faculty-student interaction)*, teaching practices* (teaching methods and course content, academic workload, challenge of online teaching)*, academic culture, career preparation and employment,* Therefore, to effectively enhance academic engagement, it is crucial to understand these aspects for the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye.

First, the results of this study strongly suggest that *the role of faculty* was crucial in enhancing academic engagement among students, as their mentorship, instructional quality, and supportive interactions significantly contribute to the students' overall academic experience. As many of national and international scholars (Bilir, 2020;

Cebrián et al., 2015; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Çapa-Aydın et al., 2015; Günüç, 2014; Ku &Hu, 2001; Öz, 2019; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993) explained that the academics who prioritize higher-order cognitive tasks, maintain interactive relationships with students, and academically challenge them tend to achieve higher levels of student engagement.

In parallel to the related literature, the results of this study indicate that students exhibit higher levels of academic engagement when taught by faculty members who specialize in their respective fields of study. This suggests that the expertise and in-depth knowledge of academics in their specialized areas positively influence academic engagement. However, a significant barrier to maximizing academic engagement is the insufficiency of faculty members for certain courses within universities established after 2000s in Türkiye. The limited number of academics prevents students from consistently receiving instruction from experts in their disciplines. It hinders their academic engagement in these universities. This reality raises the debate on the massification of higher education in Türkiye, which has gained weight with motto "one university in each city" after 2006. Although some researchers (Günay & Günay, 2011; Gür & Özoğlu, 2015) view the massification movements positively in terms of access to higher education, many scholars vehemently criticize this quantitative growth, contending that it often occurs at the expense of quality (Akbulut-Yıldırmış & Seggie, 2018; Akşab, 2023; Emil, 2020; Erdoğmuş & Esen, 2016; Karataş-Acer & Güçlü, 2017; Kavak, 2011).

The finding that the number of faculty members is insufficient relative to the increasing student population due to the massification of higher education aligns with the data provided by the CoHE (2024). The data for the 2023-2024 academic year highlights significant disparities in the distribution of faculty members across higher education. Out of the 184.416 faculty members, 153.992 are employed at public universities, 30.189 at foundation universities, and 235 at foundation vocational schools. Within this cohort, there are 37.150 full professors, 24.439 associate professors, 44.596 assistant professors, 36.438 lecturers, and 41.793 research assistants. Given the total student population of 6.950.142, specifically, there are approximately 187 students per full professor, 284 students per associate professor, 156 student per assistant professor. When thought total number, there are

approximately 38 students per faculty member in higher education institutions. Türkiye is below the OECD's (2020) average (15) in terms of the number of students per faculty member in universities. These ratios indicate a substantial faculty shortage, which poses a challenge to maintaining academic engagement and quality education.

The insufficient number of faculty members, especially in specialized fields, suggests that Türkiye is struggling to cultivate and retain talented academics across various disciplines. This shortage is exacerbated by the rapid massification of higher education. Similar to previous studies (Alkan et al., 2014; Çetinsaya, 2014; Doğan, 2013; Erdoğan, 2014; Günay & Özer, 2016; Özoğlu et al., 2016; Tekneci, 2016), this study underlines that rapid massification often overshadows the need for qualified faculty. As a result, the student-to-faculty ratios remain alarmingly high. It negatively impacts student engagement and learning outcomes. Higher academic engagement requires personalized attention, mentorship, and interaction between students and faculty, which are difficult to achieve with such disproportionate ratios. Similarly, Fidan et al. (2023) emphasizes that the massification of higher education is insufficiently backed by policies to safeguard student welfare. It causes the emergence of new forms of inequalities rather than mitigating the existing ones for student perspective. Addressing these challenges necessitates strategic efforts to increase the number of qualified faculty members. Investing in the development and retention of talented academics is essential for enhancing educational quality. The expansion of higher education does not compromise academic engagement. Therefore, policy interventions aimed at balancing the quantitative growth with qualitative improvements in faculty recruitment are crucial for the future of higher education in Türkiye.

Moreover, faculty-student interaction also affects academic engagement. According to this research, faculty members who foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment can effectively motivate students and help them overcome academic challenges. Consequently, enhancing the quality and frequency of faculty-student interactions was essential for promoting academic engagement. Interestingly, the study conducted by Cox (2013) found that interactions with faculty members do not significantly affect student engagement. On the other hand, Cox (2013) found significant relationships between faculty interaction and activities such as asking

questions in class, discussing career plans with faculty, and more frequent discussions about career plans with faculty in terms of the impact of engagement on student retention. The differing result may be due to the focus on non-traditional students. Given the changing student demographics resulting from the massification of higher education in Türkiye, this point may require further investigation. However, when looked at the related literature, most of results of studies are convergent to the results of this study in the scope of positive effects of faculty-student interaction on academic engagement (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; LaNasa et al., 2007; Mann, 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Peck, 2017a; Snijders et al., 2020).

The critical point of this study is that the variation in student-faculty interactions inside and outside the classroom is noteworthy. Faculty members often appear more approachable, open to questions, and supportive outside the classroom. It creates an environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance. In contrast, within the classroom, faculty members tend to present a more closed demeanor. It often adheres to strict discipline and not providing ample opportunities for students to ask questions. This discrepancy seems to hinder effective student engagement and learning, as the classroom environment becomes less conducive to interactive and collaborative learning. NSSE (2019) underlines that, by interacting with faculty members both inside and outside classroom, students have the opportunity to learn firsthand how experts think and solve problems. Faculty members are considered role models, mentors, and guides for lifelong learning. To achieve effective teaching in the classroom, faculty members need to establish open communication with students and provide them with feedback.

The differing interaction styles of faculty members inside and outside the classroom in Türkiye may stem from their teaching skills within the classroom. Faculty members who do not feel confident in classroom management might adopt a stricter demeanor during class sessions. This suggests that, much like the necessity of pedagogical formation training in primary and secondary education, there is a similar need for such training at the higher education level. Providing faculty with training in effective classroom management and pedagogical techniques could help them feel more secure and approachable in the classroom. This suggestion is parallel to some studies (Hannon, 2013; McCune, 2017; Stes et al., 2010) in which the development of

academics as teachers is increasingly seen as a key focus on understanding how effective teaching practices in higher education. It implies the importance of pedagogical training in higher education to improve student-faculty interactions for academic engagement.

Second, *teaching methods and strategies* have important roles on academic engagement of students. According to the results of this study, students highlight the predominance the frequent use of traditional lecturing methods. While this approach satisfies students in certain courses, it generally has a negative impact on student engagement. Lecture-heavy classes often limit opportunities for active participation and interaction, which are crucial for deeper learning and academic engagement. Similarly, according to the studies conducted by Arslantaş (2011) and Arslantaş et al. (2012), university students do not consider most of their instructors sufficient in terms of their ability to use teaching strategies, methods and techniques. Similarly, in the results of the study conducted by Karadağ and Yücel (2016-2024), university students' responses to instructors in terms of the satisfaction of teaching methods and approaches in their classrooms were also found to be unsatisfactory.

In addition, according to the results of this study, teaching strategies significantly impacts academic engagement, with variations observed across disciplines. In the field of social sciences, strategies that involve students in classroom discussions and provide platforms for expressing their thoughts seem to be particularly effective. Discussion-based teaching methods offer students the opportunity to exchange ideas within a community. Such approaches seem to enhance academic engagement. On the other hand, in the fields of natural sciences and health sciences, teaching strategies should be more application-oriented rather than solely theoretical. It is crucial to design and structure course content to include practical experiences. This can be achieved through laboratory work, clinical practice, or project-based learning. Application-focused course content would allow students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios.

That means the impact of teaching strategies on student engagement varies depending on the nature of the discipline. According to the results of this study, in social sciences, discussion and idea-sharing-based strategies are more effective; while in natural

sciences and health sciences, practical approaches are paramount. This finding overlaps with what was previously found in the literature. Studies in the literature have found that student engagement levels can vary significantly depending on the faculty in which they are enrolled. For example, Kuh (2003) found that students enrolled in business, education, and engineering departments show lower levels of engagement compared to their peers in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences departments. On the other hand, Brint et al. (2008) concluded that students majoring in humanities and social sciences do not exhibit higher engagement levels compared to those in natural sciences and engineering. Porter (2006) tries to explain this differentiation among faculties due to specific requirements of curriculum of each discipline.

That means when addressing the concept of academic engagement, it is important to identify the distinct factors that vary by faculty types in addition to the general dimensions associated with being a university student. Understanding these faculty-specific nuances can be crucial for enhancing engagement. Each faculty presents unique challenges and opportunities that influence how students interact with their academic environment. For instance, the methods of instruction, the nature of the coursework, and the expectations placed on students would differ significantly between faculties. By recognizing and addressing the specific needs and preferences of students within each faculty, universities can tailor their approaches to engage their students.

Moreover, excessive academic workload emerges as a significant barrier to engagement. This issue is particularly pronounced in departments with intensive internship requirements, such as medicine and dentistry. The heavy academic demands in these fields have noticeable effects on students' overall psychological and social engagement. The pressure to manage both rigorous coursework and practical training reduces time for social interactions and extracurricular activities. This finding is parallel to the previous studies (Chambers, 1992; Feldon, 2007; Kember, 2004; Ruohoniemi & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2009; Xerri et al., 2018). These studies generally underline the perceived excessive workload is highly associated with increased stress and decreased student engagement. This relationship suggests that when students feel overwhelmed by their academic and social responsibilities, their ability to remain

engaged with their studies diminishes. Excessive course content and demanding academic tasks contribute to this sense of overload. It may result in a decrease in the quality of the educational experience, lower retention rates, and reduced student engagement. Therefore, managing workload effectively is crucial in enhancing overall student engagement.

One of the important findings of this study is that the nature of online learning has different dynamics in terms of academic engagement when compared to face-to-face learning. This finding is supported by literature where some researchers (Bolliger & Halupa, 2018; Dixson et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2020; Türk, 2022) due to the unique characteristics of online learning environments such as physical distance and sense of isolation from peers and instructors. According to the online student engagement studies, technological tools foster reflective thinking and cognitive skills (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008; Türk, 2022). However, according to the results of this study, it has not been adequately reflected in Turkish higher education, which was caught unprepared for online learning with the onset of the pandemic. Similar to the results of this study, the related literature in Turkish higher education emphasizes the challenges faced by students in online teaching in the scope of engagement. These struggles include such as limited access to resources (Erkut, 2020), lower satisfaction (Çalışkan, 2023; Karadağ & Yücel, 2020), limited technological infrastructure (Günüç & Kuzu, 2015), lack of technology integration competence of faculty (Ayyıldız et al., 2021) and limited interaction (student-student, student-faculty) (Atasoy et al, 2020). Similarly, according to systematic review, the COVID-19 pandemic forced universities in Latin America to shift to online learning with minimal preparation time. his highlighted the need for better internet connectivity, professional training, and emotional support to improve student engagement and learning outcomes of (Salas-Pilco et al., 2022).

These results show that online teaching necessitates a different perspective compared to traditional approaches in terms of all engagement types which are academic, psychological and social engagement. The lack of physical presence, technological infrastructure and immediate feedback challenges traditional engagement methods. It highlights the need for tailored approaches that leverage technology to create interactive and supportive virtual classrooms. In this scope, Türk (2022) emphasized

alternative measures to determine the level of engagement in online learning environments in higher education. On the other hand, Kahu (2013) explained that online learning management systems have the potential to increase student engagement. The systems designed with communication, feedback, evaluation properties can enhance students' engagement in the learning process. As a result, they can be a tool for improving the quality and productivity of education. That means, for effective online engagement, universities can develop multimedia resources, foster regular communication, and provide personalized support the unique social and psychological needs of online learners.

Third, in terms of academic engagement, institutional culture also influences on student engagement. According to the results of this study, within the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye, the prioritization of academic focus far beyond social and psychological development elements and lack of internationalization efforts stand out in terms of student engagement dynamics. The dominant emphasis on academic achievement can be expressed with viewing universities merely as vocational training institutions in Türkiye. In this scope, there are some studies in the literature (Damar et al., 2015; Yıldız & Gizir, 2018) that prove universities are perceived as only vocational training institutions by academics, community and policy-makers in Türkiye. However, the primary role of universities is not only academic and vocational training; they also play crucial roles in *personal development* such as emotional intelligence (Zhoc et al., 2020), capacity for life-long learning (Filonovich, 2009), and *social development* such as understanding and appreciating diversity (Gurin et al., 2002), social integration (Tinto, 1993), and engaging in social change (Brennan, 2008). The predominantly academic focus in Turkish universities affects student engagement negatively. To address this issue, universities should promote holistic development by offering programs. They need to try balance academic rigor with opportunities for personal and social growth. Additionally, enhancing student support services such as mental health resources, career counseling, and social activities can address the diverse needs of students and improve their overall engagement.

Moreover, academic engagement is also influenced by the success of internationalization efforts. This aligns with existing literature (Green, 2018; Yebei,

2011). According to the results of this study, barriers to academic engagement include inadequate foreign language proficiency, limited access to international resources, a homogenous international student profile, and the tendency of instructors to prefer sources from either Western or Eastern origins. These factors affecting engagement actually reflect the challenges highlighted political issues within Turkish higher education. The results of Oğuz's study (2002) showed 77.95% of faculty members in Türkiye reported difficulties in improving their foreign language skills. Over the years, the gradual lowering of the foreign language minimum score in the criteria for associate professorship has continued to be a subject of research (Demir et al., 2017; Emil & Akşab, 2018), highlighting the inadequate foreign language proficiency among academics. The limitations in foreign language proficiency among academics may hinder their ability to utilize international resources. This, in turn, may prevent students from being exposed to current international perspectives and ideas in the classroom. As a result, it potentially hinders academic engagement. To enhance academic engagement in Türkiye, it is crucial to support academic staff in terms of foreign language proficiency and to encourage faculty members to keep up with current international sources.

Another factor negatively affecting student engagement is the lack of diversity among international students on campus. While students see international peers, they often do not encounter a wide variety of cultures. Students wish to meet peers from different regions and cultures to experience diversity firsthand. However, the predominance of students from Arab countries and Turkic republics limits this experience. This finding is parallel to reports and studies on mobility of international students. It is evident that Türkiye struggles to attract students from Europe and America under the scope of student mobility. When examining the home countries of most international students in Türkiye, the majority come from the Syrian Arab Republic (37.236), Azerbaijan (21.069), and Turkmenistan (18.016) (UNESCO, 2022). Similarly, according to the result of Kaya-Kaşıkcı and Glass's study (2024), Türkiye's higher education serves as an instrument for alliance building and has been able to attract international students from the Middle East, Africa and Turkic countries. However, diversifying the international student profile is necessary for student engagement. The results of Yebei's (2011) study indicated that the diversity of backgrounds and demographic characteristics among international students increases student engagement in higher

education. In a similar vein, it was found that as the density of international students increases, engagement in activities with people different from oneself (diverse-related activities) also increase academically or socially (Zhao et al., 2005). Therefore, the reasons behind consistently attracting students from the same countries for Turkish higher education should be analyzed and addressed.

Lastly, employment/employability concerns for future shape students' academic engagement. Students are more focused on career preparation than on acquiring the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that university education should provide. Finding a job after graduation is a major concern, particularly associated with the perceived lack of reputation and quality of universities established after the 2000s compared to well-established institutions in Türkiye. Students' concerns about unemployment, which negatively impact their academic engagement, are indeed not independent of existing realities. According to Eurostat (2020) data, when examining this data from 35 European countries, Türkiye has the third-highest unemployment rate among university graduates. The highest rate is in North Macedonia at 13,8%, followed by Montenegro at 13,6%. Türkiye (12,7%) ranks third among the countries for which data is available. In fact, for those with primary education or lower, the unemployment rate is 12,6%. The difference between being primary education and university graduates is only 0,1 percentage points. This data indicates that there is no difference between primary education and university graduates in finding a job for Türkiye. In contrast, this situation is the opposite in European countries. According to the European Union's 2019 average, the unemployment rate for university graduates is 4%, while it is 12,4% for those with primary education. As a result, it is not surprising that the high unemployment rates among university graduates emerge as one of struggles to academic engagement.

In some studies, it is a striking finding was that students perceived their level of engagement with studying as the least important factor related to their employability (Moreou & Leathwood, 2006; Rothwell et al., 2008). However, the literature increasingly highlights a strong dynamic between academic engagement and employment (Peck, 2017b; Tomlinson, 2018; Tymon, 2013; White, 2018). In similar scope, Peterson and Delmas (2001) discovered that students who feel that higher education will bring employment chances and better occupations are more motivated

to continue their studies. Similar to the results of the current study, these studies also suggest that their employability plans after graduation affect academic engagement in their courses. As understood from this, to enhance academic engagement at universities, students need to feel secure about their job prospects after graduation. At this point, policymakers must develop effective strategies for employment planning.

5.1.3. Discussions on Psychological Engagement

The cross-case findings of this research indicate that psychological engagement has an important role in undergraduate education. Psychological engagement encompasses students' mental and emotional involvement in their university life. It includes elements such as motivation, a sense of belonging, and emotional wellbeing. The combination of all significantly impact their university journey in positive direction. This finding is parallel to previous studies (Anderson et al., 2013; Field, 2009; Finn & Zimmer, 2012, Günüç, 2016; Kahu, 2013; Öz, 2019; Trowler, 2010). On the other hand, psychological disengagement has negative influences on university students' lives. Psychological disengagement manifests as a lack of motivation and emotional disconnection. The results of this study show a mix of both supportive and challenging aspects in terms of psychological engagement in university life. While the supportive aspects include taking autonomy and responsibility for their life, self-realization, self-efficacy; the challenging aspects include gender-based dynamics, adaptation in the first year of university, stress factors such as exams and financial issues, and freedom of expression.

First, the study reveals that students particularly are affected psychologically in the early years of university, especially their first year at university. The challenging factors such as separation from family, homesickness, taking on all responsibilities simultaneously, financial difficulties, adapting to a new environment, and struggling to make friends, feeling loneliness and lack of freedom of expression are seen as main causes of this issue. As supported by Demirbaş (2016), this reveals that the first years of university challenge the students psychologically more when compared to later years. Öz's (2019) study also supports that first and second-year university students exhibited lower engagement compared to their counterparts in later years. This was particularly evident in higher-level learning and interpersonal relationships. Similarly,

Sarwar and Ashrafi (2015) observes greater engagement in students with two or more years of university experience. Hu and Kuh (2002) found that students in their second to fourth years were less likely to be disengaged compared to first-year students.

These findings indicate the importance of university support in the initial years of university journey. The higher engagement levels observed in later years suggest that students become more accustomed to the university environment over time. Therefore, the lower engagement seen in first-year students highlights the critical need for robust student support services during the initial transition into university life. By providing comprehensive academic, psychological, and social support, universities can help first-year students adjust more effectively. The literature indicates that student support services can enhance engagement by fostering a sense of inclusion, promoting mental health, and emotional stability while disrupting patterns of disengagement (Hoyne & McNaught, 2013; Picton & Kahu, 2021; Trowler, 2010). On the other hand, Jacklin and Riche (2009) underlines an important point in the conceptualization of student support services. These services should mediate to *present a supportive culture and environment* through the analysis of students' actual needs, rather than *merely providing direct support*.

The results of this study highlight the psychological need for student support centers in higher education institutions in Türkiye, revealing a significant gap in their provision. Such services can also play a crucial role in helping students (especially for first year students) cope with the challenges revealed in this study such as homesickness, loneliness, and adapting to a new environment, thereby fostering positive mental and emotional wellbeing. In that way, universities can establish a stronger foundation for continued engagement of student throughout their university life.

Second, university life serves as a bridge from a family-dependent lifestyle to an individual one, offering opportunities for autonomy. This helps individuals feel more self-sufficient and fosters their sense of individuality. Similarly, Adams and colleagues (2006) underlined that students perceive their time at university as a beneficial experience that aids in the formation of personal and professional identities. In addition, Lairio and colleagues (2013) described university life as a phrase that

individuals lay the groundwork for numerous aspects of life, including career, family, and other interpersonal relationships. University education is a vital stage in developing both a student identity and the foundation for future endeavors.

In a similar vein, Christie (2009) uses an attractive expression to convey the psychological dimension of university life, describing it as the transition from *doing a student* to *being a student*. According to this explanation, “doing a student" emphasizes the academic actions and behaviors like attending classes, studying, and participating in academic activities. However, "being a student" focuses on the internal, emotional, and identity-related aspects such as how students perceive themselves and feel about their role. Similar to this, the result of this study emphasizes that university life is an important period that offers students the opportunity for individualization. In this study, it has been found that resilience against conflicts, selection criteria for romantic partner shaped by the university environment, their ability to make independent decisions apart from their families, and recognition of their own individual strengths and weaknesses are important indicators for developing autonomy and identity construction for university life.

However, according to this study, gender is another crucial component that shapes university students' psychological engagement, especially for women. At this point, there are different findings in the relevant literature. While some scholarly studies (Cox, 2013; LaNasa et al., 2007; Snyder, 2008) claim that gender is not a factor determining the engagement level in universities; some studies (Borhan, 2020; Cox, 2013; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Kuh et al., 2006; Pike & Kuh., 2005a; Porter, 2006;) claim that female students are more engaged in universities than males. On the other hand, Zhao and colleagues (2005) discovered that there were instances when females reported higher engagement and other times when males did, but no definitive relationship between gender and student engagement was identified. The more interesting part is that all these research results are inconsistent with the results of current study. This study reveals that female students are negatively affected in terms of psychological engagement compared to their male counterparts. It can be associated with being women in Türkiye often face additional societal and cultural barriers and pressure.

When looking at studies with results favoring females, they suggest that engagement of female students is higher in terms of careful participation in academic challenges, greater involvement in classroom learning activities, and better student-faculty interactions. This indicates that female students are in a better position regarding academic engagement, not regarding psychological engagement. As understood from this study, difficulties are rooted in societal and familial pressures that impose stricter supervision and control over their lives for female students. For instance, as understood from this study, female students often encounter limitations on their freedom such as curfews for dormitory and home entry and exit times and scrutiny over their social interactions. These restrictions not only affect their stress levels but also impede their ability to fully immerse themselves in the university experience. Consequently, female students struggle with a sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, which are crucial for psychological engagement. Similarly, Yetim (2003) found that female students have not engaged in university life completely because of gender roles in the context of Türkiye. It is likely due to internalizing external restrictions and controls of families. Unlike their male counterparts, female university students struggle to act freely and make independent decisions. It results in a conflict between traditional gender roles and the university's modern values. This conflict hampers their adaptation to university life and affects their university satisfaction.The inconsistency in the concept of engagement concerning gender has been also highlighted by Tison and colleagues (2011). They claim that these inconsistencies may stem from differences in the methodologies used and the inconsistent conceptualizations of engagement across studies. Therefore, to better understand gender differences, more detailed and multi-faceted analyses are suggested.

Lastly, the sources of stress for university students and their impact on psychological engagement have been examined. The primary sources of stress for students include academic-focused exam stress and financial stress due to challenging economic conditions. These two factors lead to psychological effects on students, which in turn reflect on their academic and social lives at the university. Similarly, Kadiyono and Liyani (2019) found that an increase in student stress causes a decrease in engagement levels. In addition, Lynam and Cachia (2017) explained that exam stress particularly causes students to experience negative emotions regarding assessments. This affects their engagement levels, as students' emotions influence how they interact with

assessments. Negative emotions such as stress and anxiety typically hinder their engagement in assessments.

The results of this research indicate that the reliance on written exams for assessments and the lack of alternative evaluation methods cause students to experience stress in demonstrating their academic performance. They value evaluations that leverage their skills, include options for choice and creativity, and are tied to a balanced workload. In particular, they appreciate assessments that align with their career goals and enhance their skill set. This supports Keppell and Carless's (2006) claim that assessments should foster real-world skills in students. Likewise, Craddock and Mathias (2009) discovered that offering choices positively impacted student grades. Therefore, universities should invest in services that aid students in cultivating personal academic qualities that boost their engagement with assessments. These services should include techniques for enhancing self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, time management, and stress management.

5.1.4. Discussions on Social Engagement

The cross-case findings of this research indicate that social engagement has important role in student growth like academic and psychological engagement, as also mentioned by some scholars (Astin, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In addition, some studies (Akşab, 2018; Mannan, 2017; Tinto, 1993) underline that social integration plays a vital role in enhancing student success, as it fosters a sense of belonging and community among students. This integration is also essential for their academic and social development, helping them to thrive both inside and outside the classroom. These studies underscore that without adequate social engagement, students may miss out on key aspects of their educational experience like the results of this study.

The results of this study indicate that campus life is a central focus for social engagement in higher education. The physical structure of campuses, along with the academic and social opportunities, plays a significant role in social engagement. The frequency and variety of cultural, artistic, and sporting activities on campus further influence this dynamic by providing diverse participation opportunities. Additionally, the operation of student clubs and the level of interaction among students are other factors. All elements mentioned above collectively create a supportive campus

environment, promoting social engagement. These results are not surprising in the sense that many researchers pointed out there are critical factors for social engagement such as supportive campus environment (Günüç, 2013; Korobova & Starobin; Peck, 2017), various campus opportunities (Boyacı et al., 2018; Yebei; 2011), effective peer interaction (Astin, 1993; Borhan, 2020; Çapa-Aydın et al., 2015; Kuh et al., 2006; Mannan, 2017), extracurricular activities (Aydın et al., 2015; Heng, 2014; Öz, 2019), discussion with diverse others (Bilir, 2020; Peck, 2017a), participation in student clubs (Bilir, 2020; Mannan, 2017; Snyder, 2018). When examined the challenges regarding social engagement, campus life is main problem the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye. It includes *separated campuses, limited interaction among different departments/faculties and limited extracurricular activities based on inactive student clubs.* To develop social engagement, it is crucial to understand these aspects for the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye.

First, the structure of a university campus, whether separated across multiple locations or centralized in a single location, influences social engagement within the institution. According to the results, separated campus structures prevent students' ability to engage in common social activities together. It creates physical barriers and reduces opportunities for spontaneous interactions and collaborations. This finding is similar to the Öz's (2019) study that claims there is a difference among faculties in terms of social/institutional dimension of engagement such as interpersonal relationships, supportive environment, and personal gains. Öz (2019) underlined it can be associated with some faculties are located on newer and still developing campuses, which offer relatively fewer facilities compared to well-established campuses. In a similar vein, Altınsoy (2011) underlined that separated campus structures lead to increased investment and operational costs due to the need to provide separate facilities for each location in Türkiye. It results in resource wastage and underutilized capacity. Additionally, it is challenging to ensure equal social, cultural, and physical opportunities for all students. In contrast, a single-campus university allows for more efficient use of shared facilities and fosters better social integration and community service.

One of the key findings of this study is the impact of the selected region, whether urban or rural, on student engagement in dispersed campuses. Particularly in rural areas, new

and developing campuses often lack sufficient social and cultural activities. This issue is exacerbated by the absence of city dynamics to support and enhance these activities. In a similar vein, university campuses in Türkiye have attracted the attention of some researchers in this regard (Altınsoy; 2011; Bicen, 2023; Güneş & Gökçe, 2022; Salihoğlu, 2021; Sıramkaya & Çınar, 2012; Yıldız et al., 2015). For example, as discussed by Altınsoy (2011), university campuses isolated from the social, cultural, and economic interactions of the city may become inward-looking and disconnected from urban and societal life. To mitigate these threats and combine the positive aspects of both campus and city universities, it is best to locate universities slightly outside the city. However, it is crucial that this distance does not become too great, as placing universities too far from the city can lead to institutions becoming isolated and inward-focused. Therefore, the location of campuses should be carefully chosen to ensure that the university and the city mutually benefit from each other's resources and opportunities. Similarly, Salihoğlu and colleagues (2021) emphasize, besides the educational activities that enhance knowledge and skills, it is crucial for students to spend quality time and create positive memories on campus. This aspect manifests as satisfaction with the quality of university life. While well-established universities have developed campus life quality over the years through accumulated experience, developing universities should focus on enhance it through campus design and administrative interventions. This underscores the responsibility of university administrations to revitalize campus life.

These results of this study showed that universities with a single campus structure tend to foster stronger communication and interaction among students. The centralized nature of a single campus means that students are more likely to encounter each other frequently. It facilitates easier and more frequent peer interactions. In addition, the proximity of various academic, social, and recreational facilities would allow for more spontaneous and organized gatherings. Students are more likely to collaborate across different disciplines and participate in diverse activities. These attempts would strengthen student interaction and improve their social engagement.

Second, campus life in the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye has limitations in interactions not only among peers from different faculties but also between students and academic members. The related literature (Krause & Coates,

2008; Kuh, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pike & Kuh, 2005a) emphasizes the importance of campus interaction for engagement, highlighting the need for universities to implement various initiatives to foster this engagement. However, in Turkish universities, especially for developing ones, interaction issues within the campus have been highlighted by many researchers in their studies (Erçevik & Önal, 2011; Öz, 2019; Yıldız et al., 2015) Departments seem isolated within themselves, with noticeable deficiencies in interacting with students and academics from other departments on common platforms. This lack of interaction among different individuals undermines an important factor in social engagement. In similar perspective, the design of spaces where they spend their time outside formal settings and the potential of these physical spaces to bring people together in Turkish universities are criticized negatively by Yıldız and colleagues (2015).

From this perspective, it is necessary to take steps that support diversity in universities. For example, offering elective courses that can be taken from different faculties, designing free elective courses as general education requirements available to all students, and supporting student-oriented activities within the campus are crucial step. They would increase both peer integrations and student-faculty interactions. Additionally, organizing events that revitalize campus life and promote social interaction are essential. These measures aim to enhance the overall campus experience and foster a more engaging university environment. Additionally, unlike didactic environments, the creation of spaces that encourage spontaneous interdisciplinary interactions among students and academics from different backgrounds is becoming increasingly important.

As understood from these arguments with the results of this study, university experience is associated with transformative experiences, such as encountering different perspectives and being able to express oneself more comfortably and freely. Sarı and Karabağ-Sarı (2014) expressed such a finding, describing the university as a place that allows students to meet people with various thoughts, offers diverse socialization opportunities, and enables intellectual development. Universities should create environments where individuals of different identities and disciplines can collaborate and listen to each other's ideas. It would foster social engagement among students. The research highlights the benefits of such interactions, noting that

interdisciplinary collaboration enhances creativity and problem-solving skills (Koyuncuoğlu, 2023). By providing spaces for these interactions, universities can support a more engaged student body.

Lastly, the results of this study shows that what university campuses offer in terms of social activities contributes to student engagement academically and socially. These services include academic activities such as seminars, conferences, and workshops, as well as social activities like concerts, theatres, arts and community events. This result is parallel to many scholars in the field of higher education studies (Günüç, 2013; Mannan, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Yebei, 2011). Some studies that engagement in extracurricular activities on campus leads to improvements and positive outcomes in several areas. These include development of intellectual skills (Baxter-Magolda, 1992, Chi et al., 2017), identity formation (Lounsbury et al., 2008), adaptation to university life (Aypay & Demirhan, 2009), entrepreneurship (Aranz et al., 2017), moral formation (Biggs & Barnett, 1981), practical competence and transferability of skills (Kuh, 1995), psychological growth (Guilmette et al., 2019). When these findings are synthesized, it becomes clear that extracurricular activities hold significant importance in higher education, both for fostering social engagement and for achieving positive outcomes.

However, according to the results of this study, the campuses of universities established after 2000s in Türkiye do not provide a vibrant environment for students to engage in extracurricular activities. Students have difficulties to find alternatives beyond the limited number of sports facilities. In addition, the presence of student clubs, which could play a significant role in promoting extracurricular involvement, is almost ghost-like. These universities showcase various student clubs in their promotions, but students do not experience these clubs on campus. This situation poses a significant barrier to social engagement. In a similar vein, Bilir (2020) examined the distribution of university students' participation in student clubs in Türkiye under the construct of student engagement. It was found that the majority of students did not wish to join such clubs. This result indicates that most university students show little interest in student clubs and do not plan to become part of them in the future. This lack of interest can be associated with insufficient number of student clubs at their universities or the absence of student clubs that align with their interests. In addition,

Boyacı and colleagues (2018) examined the reasons why students transfer between universities in Türkiye. A lack of social opportunities was been highlighted by students as one of the reasons. It was observed that students generally transfer to well-established universities. They emphasized that newly-established universities, compared to well-established institutions, have many steps to take regarding academic and social opportunities, as well as campus infrastructure and organization.

When considering these results along with the findings of this research, it becomes clear that the lack of active student clubs on campus and the limited extracurricular activities such as culture, arts, and sports present a challenge for social engagement in the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye. Therefore, effective strategies should include offering diverse academic events, supporting a variety of student clubs, organizing social and community events, and maintaining well-equipped facilities. Expanding these offerings can enhance social engagement, thereby help to obtain high student outcomes.

5.1.5. Discussions on Financial Issues, Accommodation and Nutrition

Aside from the university environment as well as academic, psychological, and social factors, various other aspects have also emerged as influential on student engagement. These aspects focus on focusing on financial issues (*financial hardship, employment as a part-time work*), accommodation (*living on-campus or off-campus, sharing common spaces, operation of student dormitories*) and nutrition (*the variety, portion sizes and prices of university and dormitory meals*).

First, according to the results of this study, financial hardship is an important factor in students' ability to engage academically, psychologically, and socially. Academically, students facing financial difficulties struggle to afford textbooks, technology, and other essential resources. It reflects on academic performance and participation in classes. Psychologically, the stress of financial instability and meeting basic needs leads to feel anxiety and decreased mental wellbeing. It makes harder to focus on their studies and personal growth. Socially, financial constraints seem to limit students' ability to participate in extracurricular activities, social events, and networking opportunities. It causes the feelings of isolation and a weaker connection to the campus community.

In a similar vein, some studies (Boyacı et al., 2018; Gündüz-Hoşgör & Çakıroğlu-Çevik, 2022) underlined the role of student expenses in higher education in the scope of student engagement. In Turkish higher education, although there is some governmental contribution to student expenses, it has been noted that the majority of educational costs are borne by the students themselves. This is parallel to the current study which indicates that students predominantly rely on family support or take out government loans that require repayment for their financial needs. This finding is also supported by the statistics of European Commission (2017) for Türkiye, the primary source of financial support for these expenses is families, with 86% of students receiving family support. Additionally, 69% of students receive governmental support. The average monthly expenses of undergraduate students are 390 Euros in Türkiye. However, at the time the data of this study were collected, the government loan amount for an undergraduate student was approximately 85 Euros (1250 Turkish liras), and it is now approximately 55 Euros (2000 Turkish liras). That means the governmental financial support to students has become even less adequate since this research data was collected. This amount remains significantly lower compared to the monthly expenses of an undergraduate student in Türkiye, making family support essential. In other words, most university students rely on financial support from their families because of limited contributions of government loan in Türkiye.

On the other hand, as Korucuk (2023) explained, Türkiye's severe economic crises have increasingly created obstacles for providing financial support to students by families. The current study also indicates that university students are struggling to meet their basic necessities, let alone cover their educational expenses. When students face financial difficulties, they often have to prioritize part-time work. This is parallel to the study conducted by Kırlıoğlu and Özdemir (2023) explaining one of the primary reasons that drives students to work is economic concern. Many students believe that working improves their overall financial wellbeing. Similarly, the results of the current study have shown that students often take up part-time jobs such as waitressing, cashiering, and sales consultancy due to economic reasons. It has also been found that some students work in these jobs secretly, without their families' knowledge. This can be evaluated as evidence of student poverty like other scholarly studies (Kete-Tepe & Özer, 2020; Yolvermez & Kaytan, 2022). In addition, students have expressed that they both actively participate in their classes and spend limited time on campus. In a

similar vein, as explained by some studies (Kuh et al., 2006; Öz, 2019), the students working in part-time jobs have been observed that a significant portion of students' daily lives is spent in a cycle of university-home/dormitory, with limited opportunities, habits, and experiences in terms of socialization and cultural activities.

As the results of this study indicate, students' involvement in employment due to economic concerns while studying in higher education has an impact on their academic, psychological, and social engagement. Similar findings have been reported in numerous other research studies (Boyacı et al., 2018; Kuh et al., 2006; Öz, 2019). Academically, students struggle to cope with their workload, while psychologically, the stress of financial hardship takes its toll. Balancing work and academic responsibilities prove challenging, leaving little time for social life on campus. Financial challenges can limit students' ability to participate in extracurricular activities and access essential resources, impacting their overall engagement. Therefore, to enhance student engagement in Turkish higher education, it is crucial to address student poverty and ensure their financial wellbeing.

Second, another finding of this study is that accommodation conditions emerge as a factor affecting engagement of university students. Accommodation that is not close to the campus limits the time spent on campus. In this study, it was observed that students staying in dormitories near the campus tend to spend more time on campus. On the other hand, students living in dormitories farther away and student living with their families leave the campus after their classes end. This situation limits both academic interaction and participation in extracurricular activities, negatively impacting their engagement. This finding actually shows similarities with the inferences about the effects of on-campus and off-campus accommodation on engagement (Borhan, 2000; Kuh et al., 2006; Pike, 1999). These studies have highlighted that residing on campus is a supporting factor for engagement from various perspectives such as increasing interaction among students (LaNasa et al., 2017) and participation in campus activities (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

However, in this study, it has been observed that the case universities established after 2000s in Türkiye do not offer on-campus accommodation options for their students. In these universities, although there are some KYK dormitories built near the campus,

many of them are constructed far from the campus. This results in a cycle where students commute between the university and their dormitory. Consequently, this negatively affects their time spent on campus and their participation in extracurricular activities. In a similar vein, Aypay and colleagues (2012) resemble these Turkish universities as commuter colleges. Commuter colleges are described as higher education institutions which offer students to only to attend courses, not giving their students opportunities to live on campus. They often lack amenities such as student union facilities, accommodation complexes, and recreation spaces. (Newbold et al., 2011). In such a context, students have more potential to face obstacles in areas such as supporting higher-level skills from the faculty, effective teaching practices, interpersonal relationships, supportive environments, and personal development.

Therefore, in addition to the current study, numerous studies (Kuh et al., 2006; LaNasa, 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Öz, 2019) support the idea that living on or near campus enhances student engagement positively. The findings from these studies serve as compelling evidence for universities to adopt more meticulous planning regarding student accommodation. Such planning not only fosters a sense of community and belonging but also promotes academic interaction and personal development. By investing in quality accommodation options close to campus, universities can create an environment that supports students both academically and socially. To enable students living with their families to experience personal responsibilities and individualization earlier, and to better engage with the social opportunities on campus, on-campus accommodation options should be supported.

On the other hand, the physical conditions and administration styles of student dormitories are also important factors affecting student engagement. Negative experiences in dormitories not only affect students' psychological wellbeing at university life but also impact them socially. Therefore, it is extremely important to uncover and address the problems in dormitories. For example, in this research, the problems regarding KYK dormitories can be categorized like that: *physical problems* such as crowded rooms, difficulties in finding personal space, transportation challenges; *resource-based problems* such as limited internet connection, banning the use of basic electrical kitchen appliances and insufficiency in nutrition opportunities; and *administrative problems* such as negative dormitory administration – student

interaction and strict dormitory rules such as control of entry-exit times. This finding is parallel to the results of Güllü and Kuşderci's study (2011) on KYK dormitories. Similarly, Altunsoy and Yener (2020) found students staying in KYK dormitories experience dissatisfaction when their expectations are not met, and as a result, they may have negative feelings such as anger and disappointment towards the services of dormitories. When these results are all combined, the importance of accommodation conditions for student engagement becomes evident. It is necessary to improve physical conditions, strengthen the available resources, and adopt a new administration perspective that considers the student viewpoint.

Lastly, one of the factors that stands out in terms of student engagement is the availability of nutritional opportunities. Due to financial constraints, students expect to encounter economically affordable options. In this study, it is already indicated that off-campus nutritional opportunities are difficult to access due to the country's economic crisis. Students evaluate university cafeterias to be economically affordable, especially when compared to the external market, but they also want an increase in the variety of meals. However, they have indicated that meals in KYK dormitories have serious complaints in terms of price, portion size, taste, hygiene and temperature. This is supported by the news of KYK student protests regarding nutrition problems in the written media and by the hashtags created on social media accounts as indicators of digital activism.

The provision of nutrition services in KYK dormitories through tenders to the private sector necessitates both internal and external supervision by the government. However, deficiencies and inadequacies in the supervision processes are occasionally brought to light because of complaints of students. It is particularly noted that more stringent inspections are needed regarding nutrition services and its standards about quality and price. This is because poor nutrition may affect students' physical health and cognitive function, leading to decreased participation in both academic and social activities (Abraham et al., 2018). Addressing these basic needs is crucial for fostering a supportive environment that enhances student engagement.

5.1.6. Discussion on Political Engagement

The current research indicates that political attempts under institutional and national levels have important roles on shaping student engagement in higher education. As underlined by Milburn-Shaw and Walker (2017), political nature and the larger political-economic environment of higher education have been disregarded for long time. However, the political dimension of student engagement has been on focus of some studies in the related literature. These studies generally examine political engagement in the scope of active citizenship (Ballard et al., 2020; Perrin & Gillis, 2019; Sunshine Hillygus, 2005). In the current study, political engagement is evaluated under a different perspective which is more similar to Neary's (2016) conceptualization. Neary (2016) emphasizes that students' political engagement differs from the student engagement defined by Quality Assurance Agency protocols like Quality Assurance regulations made by YÖKAK (2023b) in Türkiye. These protocols and regulations encourage students to represent their individual interests as customers. However, political engagement argues how students raise their voices to address broader institutional issues affecting their university life in departmental, institutional and national levels. The result of this study highlights the role of political factors in influencing student engagement regarding the lack of student voices in university governance, the dominance of certain ideological approaches over universities, and the absence of student representation in virtual faces of universities.

First, student voice in the university governance has a role on engagement. Students' academic and social demands are not being considered by the university administration, and they are not involved in the university's decision-making processes. There appears to be a barrier between them and the university administration. Although there are some communication initiatives such as "message to the rector" (rektöre mesaj) between university administration, they do not seem to function effectively. This is because there is generally no feedback or response regarding the resolution of the request or problem in these practices.

These findings are parallel to the results of Avcı and Gök's study (2022) focusing on three state universities in terms governance in higher education. They expressed that there are deficiencies in the steps of informing, consulting, and active participation

regarding the decision-making processes of the senates. It demonstrates that the primary internal stakeholders, the students, have yet to find their place in university governance. Similarly, in the literature, when examining the structure of senates in other countries, it was observed that they have a more representation for students compared to the senates in the Turkish higher education system (Korkut, 2002). For example, Küçükcan and Gür (2009) highlighted that student representatives are present in the senates to provide recommendations on research and education-related issues in Sweden. In addition, the role of students in senate in decision-making has grown in Polish higher education, with students being represented in the senate with at least 20% weight. Indeed, all these studies demonstrate that student representation in governance falls behind international standards in Turkish higher education system.

As suggested by Lizzio and Wilson (2009), it is crucial to explore some practices supporting engagement of university students in departmental and institutional decision-making process. It was underlined the support mechanisms for framing the rationales of student participation in university governance. Similar to the findings of Matthews and colleagues (2018), when discussing the view students as partners, it is understood that both students and leaders see student partnership as a form of quality assurance. However, students also view student partnership as an activity that supports social justice justifications such as equality and access.

Second, another finding of this study is the impact of dominant ideological approaches within and around the university. Such dominance becomes evident in various aspects such as social activities, invited speakers, and the themes of selected events. While the university should adopt a diversity-focused approach, the display of these ideological approaches by university administration and academics negatively affects engagement. In a similar vein, Tekerek's study (2023) examines the quality of education, academic freedom, gender roles, ethnic discrimination, and the influence of dominant ideologies in provincial universities of Türkiye. It reveals how these factors shape student engagement and student life in these institutions negatively. The study highlights the adverse conditions students face and how they seek alternative ways to cope and develop in response to these challenges.

As understood from these results, for universities to truly fulfill their mission of fostering intellectual growth and societal advancement, reducing the dominance of any single ideology is imperative. Academic freedom, diversity of thought, and inclusive engagement are foundational to a vibrant academic community. By ensuring these principles are upheld, universities can enhance student engagement. It would promote intellectual diversity and cultivate an environment conducive to critical inquiry.

Lastly, this study draws attention to the role of university virtual faces like websites and social media accounts on student engagement. The findings suggest that university web pages and social media accounts are predominantly managed from the perspective of university administrators. This administrative focus results in a lack of visibility for students on these platforms, which in turn hampers their ability to find resources and support systems essential for their development. Consequently, students face significant barriers to engagement, as they do not see themselves or their interests reflected in the online presence of their institutions. Emil's (2020) study examining the virtual faces of universities also supports the current study. It was found that in the visual analyses under the "people" category, state university homepages prominently feature university rectors, place students second, and almost entirely exclude faculty members. In addition, it was also found that the educational and community service missions are represented to a very limited extent. In fact, these results also align with the observation that university web pages are predominantly focused on themes of the rector's visits and visits made to the rector, emphasizing in the current study.

The relevant literature indicates that using social media for educational purposes has a positive impact on student engagement in higher education. Various studies (Dragseth, 2020; Fagioli et al., 2015; Junco et al., 2011) have shown that the interactive and dynamic nature of social media enhances students' engagement and interest in their courses and extracurricular activities. This increased engagement contributes to achieving educational objectives more effectively. Therefore, university virtual pages, which have become isomorphic in Türkiye, should be evolved into platforms that support students' academic, psychological, and social development in line with the interests, expectations and needs of their own students.

5.2. Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

Given its conceptual framework and findings, the present study may offer several implications in terms of theory, research, and practice.

Implications for Theory and Research

Even though there is a shared understanding regarding the complexity and importance of student engagement in higher education institutions (Carey, 2013; Kahu, 2013), scholars have yet to reach a consensus on its exact definition and dimensions as well as the process of operationalization (Fredricks et al., 2004; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Trowler, 2010; Zepke, 2018). The researchers studying student engagement in higher education settings have conceived and explored this elusive issue in several ways, employing different terminologies based on their theoretical perspectives.

The concept of student engagement in the relevant literature is often interpreted from cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives. Additionally, some studies have considered the impact of pre-university attitudes. This study, however, defines student engagement in higher education primarily through a functional and ideological approach. This perspective aligns with Kuh's (2009b) definition, which emphasizes the importance of both the efforts students put into their educational activities and the measures taken by universities to foster student engagement. Consequently, the focus of this research highlights the dual role of student effort and institutional support in fostering engagement.

Within this framework, this study also considers the interpretative perspective of Lawson and Lawson (2013). By examining academic, psychological, and social aspects in terms of student engagement and considering the environmental factors of the university in a holistic way. Additionally, it includes the socioecological dimension, focusing on the impacts of engagement on communities, institutions, and outside of classrooms. This holistic approach underscores the multidimensionality of student engagement. It emphasizes that engagement is formed and maintained not only at the individual level but also within broader institutional, social and environmental contexts.

This study's approach to categorizing student engagement under academic, psychological, and social dimensions while introducing unique factors is significant. For instance, the environmental aspects of the university can be considered under pre-university attitudes. However, the inclusion of political engagement presents a new angle in understanding engagement. Furthermore, this research expands the limited understanding of the impact of financial issues, accommodation, and nutrition on engagement.

Implications for Practice

In light of the significant political and economic changes occurring globally, as well as the shift towards a knowledge-based paradigm, the question of how universities manage their conflicting roles becomes increasingly important. The evolving landscape of higher education in Türkiye presents numerous challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed through thoughtful and strategic practices.

First, enhancing student engagement through inclusive strategies is imperative. Universities should develop comprehensive and inclusive approaches that bridge the gap between student expectations and institutional performance. This involves adopting student-centered methods that consider the diverse interests and needs of the student body. Particularly in Turkish universities established after 2000s, programs and activities aimed at increasing student engagement should be meticulously planned. These programs should support academic success while also contributing to the social and emotional development of students.

Second, there is a critical need to strengthen academic and social support services. The scope of support services provided to students should be expanded, and their accessibility should be enhanced. This includes offering counseling, guidance, and career planning support to help students overcome challenges. Universities must continuously review and improve their student support services, ensuring that feedback mechanisms are in place to gauge effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Furthermore, enriching campus life is essential for fostering a sense of community and belonging among students. Various social and cultural activities should be organized

to encourage active participation in campus life. These activities should support the endeavors of student organizations and clubs, helping students develop a strong sense of belonging to the university community. Extracurricular activities including sports, arts, and cultural events play a crucial role in enhancing student satisfaction and university engagement.

In addition, increasing quality and accountability in higher education is paramount. Universities should continuously evaluate their performance and implement necessary improvements to enhance educational quality. Student feedback should play a pivotal role in this process. Quality assurance mechanisms should be employed to monitor and assess both academic programs and student services. These mechanisms help identify areas for improvement by measuring student experiences and satisfaction levels, guiding institutional development.

Supporting student engagement in online teaching is another critical area. Innovative teaching techniques and technologies should be utilized to boost student engagement in distance learning processes. Effective use of online platforms can facilitate greater student involvement in their learning journeys. The widespread adoption of online teaching during the pandemic should be integrated with face-to-face learning to develop hybrid learning models. Such models can ensure that students benefit maximally from both online and in-person educational experiences.

Furthermore, political and economic support is vital for ensuring the financial sustainability of higher education institutions and providing more support to students. Government policies and economic incentives should be enhanced to include scholarships, loans, and other financial aids for students. Universities should diversify and increase their financial resources through partnerships with the government and private sectors. These collaborations are crucial for funding both academic and social projects within universities.

Lastly, in universities, it is crucial to systematically implement steps that support students both academically, psychologically, and socially especially in relation to student engagement. This approach implies a structured environment where student needs are met comprehensively. In thjs point, student affairs leadership plays a pivotal role in this process, as it involves creating and managing programs that promote

student wellbeing and academic success (Barnes, 2020; Barr, 1993). Student affairs professionals can promote active involvement in university life through student organizations, events, and advisory services (Kuh, 2009b).

For Türkiye, the findings of this research highlight the gaps and areas for improvement in student affairs leadership and student support services via professionals. These student support professionals should focus on fostering an environment where students feel supported in all aspects of their university life. This can be achieved by offering tailored services that address both academic challenges and socio-psychological needs, thereby enhancing overall student engagement and outcomes. By adopting such systematic and holistic approaches, Turkish universities can improve student satisfaction and success rates. It would contribute to the development of a more supportive higher education system.

These recommendations aim to improve student experiences, enhance student growth, and elevate the overall quality of undergraduate education in Türkiye's higher education institutions. Shaping higher education policies in this direction will contribute significantly to Türkiye’s competitiveness in the global higher education arena and help achieve excellence in education.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should focus on a more detailed examination of the specific institutional differences among state and foundation universities or well-established universities and the universities established after 2000s in Türkiye. It would be beneficial to conduct comparative studies that identify which strategies and practices are most effective in enhancing student engagement. This could include longitudinal studies tracking student progress and engagement over several years. In addition, qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with internal stakeholders such as students, faculty, administrative personnel, university administrators, and external stakeholders should be conducted. It would uncover nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities unique to these institutions.

Additionally, further research should explore the impact of socio-economic factors on student engagement in the universities. Understanding how financial constraints,

family pressures, and work commitments affect their academic, psychological and social engagement is crucial. Studies could investigate the efficacy of various student support systems such as financial aid, counseling services, and academic mentoring programs in mitigating these challenges. By identifying the most effective support mechanisms, future research can provide valuable recommendations for policy-makers and university administrators aiming to create more inclusive and supportive educational environments.

To complement these studies, the development of a Türkiye-specific quantitative university engagement survey is recommended. Such a survey should be tailored to capture the unique aspects of student engagement in the context of Turkish higher education, particularly focusing on the experiences of students in universities established post-2000. This survey could assess various dimensions of engagement. The data collected through this instrument would provide a comprehensive overview of student engagement across different institutions, enabling more targeted and effective interventions to support student growth.

REFERENCES

Abes E. S., Jones S. R., & Stewart D-L. (Eds.). (2019). *Rethinking college student development theory using critical frameworks*. Stylus.

Abraham, S., Noriega, B. R., & Shin, J. Y. (2018). College students eating habits and knowledge of nutritional requirements. *Journal of Nutrition and Human Health, 2*(1), 13-17.

Ackermann, E. (2004). Constructing knowledge and transforming the world. In M. Tokoro & L. Steels (Eds.), *A learning zone of one's own: Sharing representations and flow in collaborative learning environments* (pp. 15–37). IOS Press.

Adams, G. A., Bezonsky, M. D., & Keating, L. (2006). Psychosocial resources in first-year university students: The role of identity processes and social relationships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35*(1), 81–91.

Akbulut-Yıldırmış, M., & Seggie, F. N. (2018). Yükseköğretim çalışmalarının akademik bir alan olarak gelişimi: Uluslararası ve ulusal düzeyde alan yazın incelemesi. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi, 8*(3), 357-367.

Akşab, Ş. (2018). Üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyal bütünleşme algılarının geliştirilmesine yönelik bir uygulama. [Unpublished master thesis]. Gaziantep University.

Akşab, Ş. (2023). Türkiye yükseköğretiminde kitleselleşme hareketleri. *The 6th International Higher Education Studies Conference*. Fenerbahçe University, Istanbul.

Alan, A. K., Kabadayı, E. T., & Cavdar, N. (2018). Beyond obvious behaviour patterns in universities: student engagement with university, *Research Journal of Business and Management 5*(3), 222–230.

Alfieri, L., Brooks, P. J., Aldrich, N. J. & Tenenbaum, H. R. (2011). Does discovery-based instruction enhance learning? *Journal of Educational Psychology 103*(1), 1-18.

Alkan, R. M., Suiçmez, M., Aydınkal, M., & Şahin, M. (2014). Meslek yüksekokullarındaki mevcut durum: Sorunlar ve bazı çözüm önerileri, *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 4*(3), 133-140.

Altbach, P. G. (2007). *Tradition and transition: The international imperative in higher education*. Sense Publishers.

Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2009) *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution*. UNESCO.

Altınsoy, S. (2011). Yeni devlet üniversitelerinin gelişimi: Sorunlar ve politika önerileri. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 2*, 98-104.

Altunsoy, M., & Yener, D. (2020). Hizmet kalitesi ve hizmet kalitesini etkileyen faktörler: KYK örneği. *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research (JSHSR), 7*(58), 2402-2413.

Anderson, C. W. (1993) *Prescribing the life of the mind*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Anderson, L., Ostrom, A. L., Corus, C., Fisk, R. P., Gallan, A. S., Giraldo, M., Mende, M., Mulder, M., Rayburn, S. W., Rosenbaum, M. S., Shirahada, K., & Williams, J. D. (2013). Transformative service research: An agenda for the future. *Journal of Business Research, 66*(8), 1203-1210.

Angus Busby, T. L. (2011). An exploration of campus recreation's role in student engagement. [Unpublished master thesis]. Manitoba University.

Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*, 369-386.

Arranz, N., Ubierna, F., Arroyabe, M. F., Perez, C., & Fdez. de Arroyabe, J. C. (2017). The effect of curricular and extracurricular activities on university students' entrepreneurial intention and competences. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(11), 1979-2008.

Arlı, A. (2016). Yükseköğretimde büyüme, farklılaşma ve reorganizasyon: İstanbul örneği (1980-2015). *Sosyoloji Konferansları, 54*, 199-243.

Arnold, K., & King, I. C. (1997). *College student development and academic life: Psychological, intellectual, social, and moral issues*. Garland Publishing Inc.

Arslantaş, H. (2011). Öğretim elemanlarının öğretim stratejileri-yöntem ve teknikleri, iletişim ve ölçme değerlendirme yeterliklerine yönelik öğrenci görüşleri. *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi,* 8(15), 487-506.

Arslantaş, H., Cinoğlu, M., & Yıldız, M. (2012). Öğretim elemanlarının sınıf içi öğretim becerilerinin öğrenci görüşlerine göre değerlendirilmesi. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 13*(3), 67-90.

Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*. The University of Chicago Press.

Ashwin, P. (2009). *Analysing teaching-learning interactions in higher education: Accounting for structure and agency*. Continuum.

Askham, P. (2008). Context and identity: Exploring adult learners' experiences of higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 32*(1), 85–97.

Assor, A. (2012). Allowing choice and nurturing an inner compass: Educational practices supporting students' need for autonomy. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 421–440). Springer.

Astin, A. W. (1970). The methodology of research on college impact (I). *Sociology of Education*, *43*, 223-254.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A development theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 518-529.

Astin, A. W. (1985). *Achieving educational excellence*. Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college: four critical years revisited*. Jossey Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *College Student Development and Academic Life: Psychological, Intellectual, Social and Moral Issues, 40*(5), 251–263.

Atasoy, R., Özden, C., & Kara, D. N. (2020). Covid-19 pandemi sürecinde yapılan E-ders uygulamalarının etkililiğinin öğrencilerin perspektifinden değerlendirilmesi. *Electronic Turkish Studies, 15*(6), 95–122.

Avcı, H., & Gök, E. (2022). Yükseköğretimde yönetişim: Türkiye'de üniversite senatoları ve katılımcılık. *Üniversite Araştırmaları Dergisi, 5*(3), 248-262.

Aypay, A., Çekiç, O., & Boyacı, A. (2012). Student retention in higher education in Turkey: A qualitative study. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 14*(1), 91-116.

Aypay, A., & Demirhan, A. A. G. (2009). Öğrencilerin üniversiteye sosyal uyumu bir üniversite örneği. *Uşak Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 2*(1), 46-64.

Ayyıldız, P., Yılmaz, A., & Baltacı, H. S. (2021). Exploring digital literacy levels and technology integration competence of Turkish academics. *International Journal of Educational Methodology, 7*(1), 15-31.

Baeten, M., Dochy, F., Struyven, K., Parmentier, E. & Vanderbruggen, A. (2016). Student-centred learning environments: An investigation into student teachers' instructional preferences and approaches to learning. *Learning Environments Research 19*(1), 43-62.

Ballard, P. J., Ni, X., & Brocato, N. (2020). Political engagement and wellbeing among college students. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 71*, 101209.

Banaszak, B. (2015). Student engagement in higher education policy making: A view from the Polish representative in the Bologna follow-up group. In M. Klemenčič, S. Bergan and R. Primožič (Eds.), *Student engagement in Europe: Society, higher education and student governance* (pp.283-290). Council of Europe.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 1-26.

Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 1*, 164–180.

Barnacle, R., & Dall'Alba, G. (2017). Committed to learn: Student engagement and care in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development, 36*(7), 1326–1338.

Barnes, A. (2020). Higher education and student affairs: Applying expertise in student leadership development and the collegiate context. *New Directions for Student Leadership, 165*, 99-112.

Barr, M. (Ed.). (1993). *The handbook of student affairs administration*. Jossey-Bass.

Barr, R., & Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change, 26*(6), 13–25.

Baxter-Magolda, M. B. (1992). Cocurricular influences on college students' intellectual development. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 203–213.

Beatty, I. (2004). Transforming student learning with classroom communication systems. *Research Bulletin, 3*, 1–13.

Berger, J. B. (2002). The influence of the organisational structures of colleges and universities on college student learning. *Peabody Journal of Education, 77*(3), 40-59.

Bicen, A. (2023). Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi kampüs planlama ve uygulama süreci üzerine bir değerlendirme. *Premium e-Journal of Social Sciences (PEJOSS), 7*(34), 989-999.

Biggs, D., & Barnett, R. (1981). Moral judgment development of college students. *Research in Higher Education, 14*, 91-102.

Bilir, B. (2020). Yükseköğretimde öğrenci bağlılığının araştırılması. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Eskişehir Osmangazi University.

Birnbaum, R. (1991). *How colleges work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Boekaerts, M., & Niemivirta, M. (2000). Self-regulated learning: finding a balance between learning goals and ego-protective goals, in Handbook of Self-Regulation, eds M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, and M. Zeidner (San Diego, CA: Academic Press), 417–451.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods.* Pearson.

Bok, D. (2010). Converging for diversity and democracy: A higher education. In S. Bergan and R. Damian (Eds.), *Higher education for modern societies: Competences and values, Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 15*. Council of Europe Publishing.

Bolliger, D. U., & Halupa, C. (2018). Online student perceptions of engagement, transactional distance, and outcomes. *Distance Education, 1*(18), 299-316.

Bologna Process Ministerial Conference (2003). *Realizing the European Higher Education Area: Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin* on 19 September 2003. http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Communique1.pdf.

Bols, A. T. G. (2017). Enhancing student representation. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change, 3*(1), 81– 89.

Bond, M., Buntins, K., & Bedenlier, S. (2020). Mapping research in student engagement and educational technology in higher education: A systematic evidence map. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 17*(2), 1-30.

Bonwell, C. C., & Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports.

Borhan, E. (2020). *Uncovering the relationship between student engagement and organizational culture in a public university in Turkey*. [Unpublished master thesis]. Middle East Technical University.

Borhan, E., & Emil, S. (2021). Culture does matter: Exploring the association between organizational culture and student engagement. *5th International Higher Education Studies Conference*. Association for Higher Education Studies.

Borup, J., Graham, C. R., West, R. E., Archambault, L., & Spring, K. J. (2020). Academic communities of engagement: An expansive lens for examining support structures in blended and online learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 68*(2), 807–832.

Bouta, H., Retalis, S., & Paraskeva, F. (2012). Utilizing a collaborative macro-script to enhance student engagement: A mixed method study in a3D Virtual Environment. *Computers in Education, 58*(1), 501-517.

Bowden, J. L., Tickle, L., & Naumann, K. (2019). The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: A holistic measurement approach. *Studies in Higher Education, 46*(3), 1-18.

Bowman, N. A., Rockenbach, A. N., & Mayhew, M. J. (2015). Campus religious/worldview climate, institutional religious affiliation, and student engagement. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 52*(1), 24-37.

Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P. (2011). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development, 16*(2), 133-145.

Bovill, C., Cook- Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L., & Moore- Cherry, N. (2016). Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: Overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student– staff partnerships. *Higher Education, 71*(2), 195– 208.

Boyacı, A., Karacabey, M. F., Özdere, M., & Öz, Y. (2018). The analysis of the factors that weaken engineering students' engagement and lead them to transfer to other universities. *Çukurova University Faculty of Education Journal, 47*(2), 384-410.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Braxton, J., & McClendon, S. (2001). The fostering of social integration and retention through institutional practice. *College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 3*, 57–71.

Brennan, J. (2008). Higher education and social change. *Higher Education, 56*, 381-393.

Brint, S., Cantwell, A. M., & Hanneman, R. A. (2008). The two cultures of undergraduate academic engagement. *Research in Higher Education, 49*(5), 383–402.

Brennan, J., King, R., & Lebeau, Y. (2004). *The role of universities in the transformation of societies*. Association of Commonwealth Universities/Centre for Higher Education Research and Information.

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2011). Student engagement trends over time. In H. E. Fitzgerald, C. Burack, & S. D. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship: Contemporary landscapes, future directions: Vol 2. Community-campus partnerships* (pp. 411–430). Michigan State University Press.

Brown, R. M., & Mazzarol, T. W. (2009). The importance of institutional image to student satisfaction and loyalty within higher education. *Higher Education, 58*(1), 81–95.

Bryson, C. (2014). *Clarifying the concept of student engagement: In understanding and developing student engagement.* Routledge.

Bryson, C. (2015). Researching, advancing and inspiring student engagement (RAISE). In: Lea, J. (Eds.). *Enhancing learning and teaching in higher education: Engaging with the dimensions of practice*. Open University Press.

Bryson, C., & Hardy, C. (2014). Nottingham tales: diverse student journeys through their undergraduate degree. In C. Bryson (Ed.), *Understanding and developing student engagement* (pp. 25–46). Routledge.

Bryson, C., Hardy, C., & Hand, L. (2009). Student expectations of higher education. *Learning and Teaching Update: Innovation and Excellence in the Classroom, 27*, 4–6.

Buckley, A. (2014). How radical is student engagement? (And what is it for?). *Student Engagement and Experience Journal, 3*(2), 1– 23.

Bülbül, T. (2017). Factors influencing access to higher education in Turkey. In S. Renes (Ed.), *Global voices in higher educat*ion (pp. 149-171). IntechOpen.

Campbell, C. M., & Cabrera, A. F. (2011). How sound is NSSE? Investigating the psychometric properties of NSSE at a public, research-extensive institution. *Review of Higher Education, 35*(1), 77-103.

Campbell, J. D. (1990). Self-esteem and clarity of the self-concept, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 59*(3), 538–549.

Cannon, R., & Newble, D. (2000). *Handbook for teachers in universities and colleges*. Kogan Page.

Carey, P. (2013). *Student engagement in university decision-making: Policies, processes and the student voice*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Lancaster University.

Carey, P. (2012). Student engagement: Stakeholder perspectives on course representation in university governance. *Studies in Higher Education, 38*(9), 1290– 1304.

Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., Melton, M., & Price, E. (2015). *Learning while earning: The new normal*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED574376.

Casimiro, L. (2015). *Engagement-for-Achievement: Creating a Model for Online Student Engagement.* Paper presented at the EdMedia: World Conference on Educational Media and Technology 2015, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Cebrián, G., Grace, M., & Humphris, D. (2015). Academic staff engagement in education for sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 106*, 79-86.

Chambers, E. (1992). Work-load and the quality of student learning. *Studies in Higher Education, 17*(2), 141–153.

Chan, R. Y. (2016). Understanding the purpose of higher education: An analysis of the economic and social benefits for completing a college degree. *Journal of Education Policy, Planning and Administration, 6*(5), 1–40.

Chen, P. S. D., Gonyea, R., & Kuh, G. (2008). Learning at a distance: Engaged or not?. *Innovate: Journal of Online Education, 4*(3), 3.

Chen, P.S. D., Lambert, A. D., & Guidry, K. R. (2010). Engaging online learners: The impact of web-based learning technology on college student engagement. *Computers & Education, 54*(4), 1222–1232.

Chi, X., Liu, J., & Bai, Y. (2017). College environment, student involvement, and intellectual development: evidence in China. *Higher Education, 74*, 81-99.

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1991). Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 47*, 63 – 69.

Chickering, A. W., and Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Christie, H. (2009). Emotional journeys: Young people and transition to university. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 30*(2), 123–136.

Chism, N. (2004). Characteristics of effective teaching in higher education: Between definitional despair and certainty, *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching, 15*(3), 5-36.

Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (2012). *Handbook of research on student engagement.* Springer Science & Business Media.

Chun, E., & Evans, A. (2016). Rethinking cultural competence in higher education: An ecological framework for student development. *ASHE Higher Education Report 42*(4). John Wiley & Sons.

Clegg, P. (2008). Creativity and critical thinking in the globalised university. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 45*, 219–226.

CoHE (Council of Higher Education). (2021). *2020-2021 Yükseköğretim istatistikleri: Öğrenim düzeyine göre öğrenci sayısı*. https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/.

CoHE (Council of Higher Education). (2024). Yükseköğretim bilgi yönetim sistemi. https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/.

CoHE (Council of Higher Education). (2023). *Yükseköğretim Kurulundan 34 yaş üstü kadınlara devlet üniversitelerinde özel kontenjan*. https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2023/34-yas-ustu-kadinlara-devlet-universitelerinde-ozel-kontenjan.aspx.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Routledge.

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: A guide for faculty.* Jossey- Bass.

Cox, B. G. (2013). *Academic and social integration of the non-traditional college student: Does engagement affect retention?* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of North Carolina.

Craddock, D., & Mathias, H. (2009). Assessment options in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34*, 127–140.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Merrill Prentice Hall.

Crisp, G., Palmer, E., Turnbull, D., Nettelbeck, T., Ward, L., LeCouteur, A., Sarris, A., Strelan, P., & Schneider, L. (2009). First year student expectations: Results from a university-wide student survey. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 6*(1), 11–26.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meanings and perspectives in the research process*. Allen & Unwin.

Crozier, G. et al. (2008). Different strokes for different folks: Diverse students in diverse institutions – experiences of higher education. *Research Papers in Education, 23*(2), 167-77.

Czerniawski, G., & Kidd, W. (eds.) 2011. *Student voice handbook: Bridging the academic/ practitioner divide*. Emerald Group Publishing.

Çalışkan, Ş. (2010). Üniversite öğrencilerinin harcamalarının kent ekonomisine katkısı (Uşak Üniversitesi örneği). *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 9*(31), 169-179.

Çalışkan, Z. (2023). *The relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction in higher education.* [Unpublished master thesis]. Middle East Technical University.

Çapa-Aydın, Y., Güneri, O. Y., Yıldırım, F. B., & Çağ, P. (2015). Predicting college student success: College engagement and perceived English language proficiency. *Çukurova University Faculty of Education Journal, 44*(2), 229-240.

Dakovic, G., & Zhang, T. (2021). Student-centered learning from a European policy and practice perspective. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Student-Centered Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, (Eds.) S. Hoidn and M. Klemenčič, 562–580. Routledge.

Damar, M., Dereli, Y., & Dicle, Z. (2015). deuKariyeriM: Üniversiteler için bir kariyer yönetim sistemi. *Bilişim Teknolojileri Dergisi, 8*(2), 89.

Davies, M. (2011). Introduction to the special issue on critical thinking in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development, 30*(3), 255–260.

Delialioğlu, Ö. (2012). Student engagement in blended learning environments with lecture-based and problem-based instructional approaches. *Educational Technology & Society*, 310–322.

DeMarrais, K. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. In K. deMarrrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for Research* (pp. 51-68). Erlbaum.

Demir, E., Demir, C. G., & Özdemir, M. Ç. (2017). Akademik yükseltme ve atama sürecine yönelik öğretim üyesi görüşleri. *Journal of Higher Education and Science, 1*, 12–23.

Demirbaş, C. (2016). *Yeni başlayanlar için üniversite*. Doruk Yayınları.

Deniz, T. (2019). *Türkiye'de üniversiteler ve bölgesel gelişme politikaları*. SETA Kitapları.

D'Errico, F., Paciello, M., & Cerniglia, L. (2016). When emotions enhance students' engagement in e-learning processes. *Journal of E-Learning and Knowledge Society, 12*(4), 9–23.

Deveci-Şirin, H., Erdoğan, A., Şirin, E.F., & Işık, Ç. (2022). The effect of students' trust in instructors on students' class participation and school engagement: Example of faculty of sports sciences. *Turkish Journal of Sport and Exercise, 24*(3), 285-297.

De Wit, H. (2018). Collaborative online international learning in higher education, In *Encyclopaedia of international higher education systems and institutions*. Springer.

Dixson, M. D., Greenwell, M. R., Rogers-Stacy, C., Weister, T., & Lauer, S. (2017). Nonverbal immediacy behaviors and online student engagement: Bringing past

instructional research into the present virtual classroom. *Communication Education, 66*(1), 37–53.

Doğan, D. (2013). Yeni kurulan üniversitelerin sorunları ve çözüm önerileri. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 3*(2), 108–116.

Doyle, T. (2008). *Helping students learn in a self-centered environment*. Stylus.

Dragseth, M. (2020). Building student engagement through social media. *Journal of Political Science Education, 16*, 243 - 256.

Duderstadt, J. J., Atkins, D. E., & Van Houweling, D. (2002). *Higher education in the digital age: Technology issues and strategies for American colleges and universities*. American Council on Education and Praeger.

Dunne, E. (2016). Design thinking: A framework for student engagement? A personal view. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change, 2*(1), 1-8.

Dunne, J. (2017). Working placement reflective assessments and employability enhanced through highlighting graduate attributes. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 8*(1), 40– 59.

Eberlein, T., Kampmeier, J., Minderhout, V., Moog, R. S., Platt, T., & Varma-Nelson, P. (2008). Pedagogies of engagement in science. A comparison of PBL, POGIL, and PLTL, *Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education, 36*(4), 262-273.

Eccles, J., & Wang, M.-T. (2012). So what is student engagement anyway? In S. Christenson, A. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 133–148). Springer.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review, 14*(4), 532-550.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1991). Better stories and better constructs: The case for rigor and comparativelogic. *Academy of Management Review, 16*(3), 620-627.

Eliüşük-Bülbül, A., & Yılmaz-Özelçi, S. (2018). Adaptation of student engagement in school scale into Turkish a study of validity and reliability. *Uluslararası Avrasya Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 9*(31), 854-871.

Emil, S. (2020). Üniversitelerin sanal yüzü ilk bakışta ne söyler? Türkiye üniversitelerinin kurumsal internet sitelerinin açılış sayfaları görsel ve metinsel içerik analizi. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi, 10*(1), 51–60. doi:10.2399/yod.19.009.

Emil, S., & Akşab, Ş. (2018). Türkiye yükseköğretiminde araştırma üniversitesi kavramını anlamak: Karşılaştırmalı analiz. *13th International Congress on Educational Administration*. Sivas Cumhuriyet University.

Emil, S., & Kondakçı,Y. (2017). Türkiye üniversitelerinin ortak değerler analizi. *12th International Congress on Educational Administration*. Kızılcahamam, Ankara.

Erçevik, B., & Önal, F. (2011). Üniversite kampüs sistemlerinde sosyal mekân kullanımları. *Megaron, 6*(3), 151-161.

Erdoğan, A. (2014). Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin gündemi için politika önerisi. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 4*(1), 1-17.

Erdoğmuş, N., & Esen, M. (2016). Classifying universities in Turkey by hierarchical cluster analysis. *Education and Science, 184*, 363–382.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. Norton.

Erkut, E. (2020). Covid-19 sonrası yükseköğretim. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi, 10*(2), 125-133.

European Association for Quality Assurance. (2005). Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area. *Report, European Association for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https:// enqa.eu/ wp- content/ uploads/ 2015/ 11/ ESG_ 2015.pdf.

EUA (2019). *Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance* – Report by Gover, A., Loukkola, T., Peterbauer, H., European University Association, Brussels, Belgium.

Eurostat (2019). *Tertiary education statistics*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu › data.

Eurostat (2020). *Employment rates by sex, age and educational attainment level*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database.

European Commission (2017). *Avrupa yükseköğretiminde ulusal öğrenci harçları ve destek sistemleri – 2017/18. Eurydice – Kesin veriler*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the Avropean Union.

Evans, N. J. (1987). A framework for assisting student affairs staff in fostering moral development. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 66*(4), 191-193.

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2009). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Fagioli, L., Rios-Aguilar, C., & Deil-Amen, R. (2015). Changing the context of student engagement: Using Facebook to increase community college student persistence and success. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education, 117*, 1 - 42.

Fallows, S., & Steven C. (2000). Building employability skills into the higher education curriculum: a university-wide initiative. *Education + Training, 42*(2), 75-83.

Feldman, K., & Newcomb, T. (1969). *The impact of college on students*. Jossey-Bass.

Feldon, D. F. (2007). Cognitive load and classroom teaching: The double-edged sword of automaticity. *Educational Psychologist, 42*(3), 123–137.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), 80-92.

Fidalgo, P., Thormann, J., Kulyk, O., & Lencastre, J. A. (2020). Students' perceptions on distance education: A multinational study. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 17*, 11–15.

Fidan, T., Öcal, M., Ayyıldız, P., & Kurt, T. (2023). Why the massification of higher education does not mean less inequalities: A student welfare-centered analysis. *The 6th International Higher Education Studies Conference*. Fenerbahçe University.

Field, J. (2009). *Well-being and happiness: Inquiry into the future of lifelong learning*. (thematic paper 4). National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

Fielding, M. (2001). Students as radical agents of change. *Journal of Educational Change, 2*, 123–141.

Fielding, M. (2004). Transformative approaches to student voice: Theoretical underpinnings, recalcitrant realities. *British Educational Research Journal, 30*(2), 295– 311.

Filonovich, S. (2009). Life-long learning: Consequences for higher education. *Educational Studies,* 55-66.

Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). *Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter?* In Handbook of Research on Student Engagement, 97–131. Springer Science and Business Media.

Fletcher, A. F. (2017). *Student voice revolution: The meaningful student involvement handbook*. Common Action Publishing.

Foubert, J. D., Nixon, M. L., Sisson, V. S., & Barnes, A. C. (2005). A longitudinal study of Chickering and Reisser's Vectors: Exploring gender differences and implications for refining the theory. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*, 461 – 471.

Fredricks, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Paris, A. (2004). School Engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59–109.

Gibbs, G. (1981). *Teaching students to learn*. Open University Press.

Giddens, A. (1991). *The consequences of modernity*. Polity Press.

Gist, M. E., & Mitchell, T. R. (1992). Self-efficacy: A theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability, *Academy of Management Review 17*(2), 183–211.

Gladieux, L. E., & Swail, W. S. (1999). The virtual university and educational opportunity: Panacea or false hope? *Higher Education Management, 11*(2), 43-56.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.

Gonyea, R. M., & Kinzie, J. (2015). *Independent colleges and student engagement: Descriptive analysis by institutional type*. Council of Independent Colleges.

Graham, S., & Donaldson, J. F. (1999). Adult students' academic and intellectual development in college. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *49*, 147-162.

Gravett, K., Kinchin, I. M., & Winstone, N. E. (2019). More than customers: Conceptions of students as partners held by students, staff, and institutional leaders. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1– 14.

Grebennikov, L., & Shah, M. (2013). Student voice: Using qualitative feedback from students to enhance their university experience. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(6), 606–618.

Green, P. (2011). A literature review of peer assisted learning (PAL). *National HE STEM*.

Green, W. (2018). Engaging students in ınternational education: Rethinking student engagement in a globalized world. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 23*, 3-9.

Greene, B. A. (2015). Measuring cognitive engagement with self-report scales: Reflections from over 20 years of research. *Educational Psychologist, 50*(1), 14–30.

Grünbaum, N. N. (2007). Identification of ambiguity in the case study research typology: What is a unit of analysis? *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 10*(1), 78-97.

Guilmette, M., Mulvihill, K., Villemaire-Krajden, R., & Barker, E. T. (2019). Past and present participation in extracurricular activities is associated with adaptive self-regulation of goals, academic success, and emotional wellbeing among university students. *Learning and Individual Differences, 73*, 8-15.

Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(3), 330–367.

Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & Perencevich, K. C. (Eds.). (2004). *Motivating reading comprehension: Concept oriented reading instruction*. Erlbaum.

Güllü, K., & Kuşderci, S. (2011). Yükseköğrenim Kredi ve Yurtlar Kurumunun verdiği hizmetlerin üniversite öğrencileri tarafından algılanması: *Sivas Yurtkur örneği. Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 1*(30), 185-209.

Gün, F., Turabik, T., Arastaman, G., & Akbaşlı, S. (2019). Adaptation of university student engagement inventory to Turkish culture: Validity and reliability study, *İnönü University Journal of the Faculty of Education, 20*(2), 507-520.

Günay, D., & Günay, A. (2011). 1933'ten günümüze Türk yükseköğretiminde niceliksel gelişmeler. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 1*, 1-22.

Günay, D., & Özer, M. (2016). Türkiye'de meslek yüksekokullarının 2000'li yıllardaki gelişimi ve mevcut zorluklar. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 6*(1), 1–12.

Güneş, Z., & Gökçe, D. (2022). Dağınık planlı kent dışı genç üniversite yerleşkelerinde büyüme ve gelişme: Düzce Üniversitesi Konuralp Yerleşkesi örneği. *Düzce Üniversitesi Bilim ve Teknoloji Dergisi, 10*(2), 847-861.

Günüç, S. (2013). *Determining the role of technology in student engagement and examining of the relationships between student engagement and technology use in class.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Anadolu University.

Günüç, S. (2014). The relationships between student engagement and their academic achievement. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications, 5*(4), 199-214.

Günüç, S. (2016). *Üniversitelerde öğrenci bağlılığı*. Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.

Günüç, S., & Kuzu, A. (2015). Student engagement scale: Development, reliability and validity. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 40*, 587–610.

Günüç, S., Artun, H., Yiğit, E., & Keser, H. (2022). Examining the relationship between student engagement and campus climate: A case in Turkey. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 23*(4), 1099–1119.

Gür, B. S. (2022). Yükseköğretime geçişte bölgeler ve iller arası öğrenci hareketliliği. *Üniversite Araştırmaları Dergisi, 5*(2), 130-139.

Gür, B. S., & Özoğlu, M. (2015). Türkiye'de yükseköğretim politikaları: Erişim, kalite ve yönetim. In A. Gümüş (Ed.), *Türkiye'de eğitim politikaları* (pp. 299–321). Nobel.

Hannon, J. (2013). Incommensurate practices: Sociomaterial entanglements of learning technology implementation. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 29,* 168–178.

Harper, S. R. (2008). Realizing the intended outcomes of brown: High-achieving African American male undergraduates and social capital. *American Behavioral Scientist. 51*(7), 1–24.

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (Eds.) (2009). *Student engagement in higher education*. Routledge.

Hassel, S., & Ridout, N. (2018). An investigation of first-year students' and lecturers' expectations of university education. *Frontiers in Psychology 8*, 2218.

Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. Higher Education Academy.

Helgesen, Ø., & Nesset, E. (2007). Images, satisfaction and antecedents: Drivers of student loyalty? a case study of a Norwegian University College, *Corporate Reputation Review, 10*(1), 38–59.

Heng, K. (2014). The relationships between student engagement and the academic achievement of first-year university students in Cambodia. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 23*(2), 179-189.

Hensley N. (2020). Educating for sustainable development: Cultivating creativity through mindfulness. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 243, 118542.

Hoffman, M., Richmond, J., Morrow, J., & Salomone, K. (2002). Investigating "sense of belonging" in first-year college students, *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 4*(3), 227–256.

Hoidn, S. (2020). Beyond the student-centered higher education classroom: The student-centered ecosystems framework. *ETH Learning and Teaching Journal, 2*(2), 191-195.

Hospel, V., Galand, B., & Janosz, M. (2016). Multidimensionality of behavioural engagement: Empirical support and implications. *International Journal of Educational Research, 77*, 37-49.

Howard, S. K., Ma, J., & Yang, J. (2016). Student rules: Exploring patterns of students' computer-efficacy and engagement with digital technologies in learning. *Computers & Education, 101*, 29–42.

Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2007). *Millennials go to college: Strategies for a new generation on campus* (2nd ed.). Life Course Associate.

Hoyne, G. F. & McNaught, K. (2013). Understanding the psychology of seeking support to increase Health Science student engagement in academic support services. *A Practice Report, International Journal of First Year in Higher Education, 4*(1), 109–116.

Hu, S., & Kuh, G. D. (2001). Computing experience and good practices in undergraduate education: Does the degree of campus "wiredness" matter? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *9*(49), 1-17.

Hu, S., & Kuh, G. D. (2002). Being (dis)engaged in educationally purposeful activities: The influences of student and institutional characteristics. *Research in Higher Education, 43*(5), 555–575.

Hu, S., & Kuh, G. D. (2003). Diversity experiences and college student learning and personal development. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(3), 320–334.

Hunter, M., Tobolowsky, B., & Gardner, J. (2010). *Helping sophomores succeed: Understanding and improving the second-year experience*. John Wiley and Sons.

Isaeva, R., Eisenschmidt, R., Vanarib, K., & Kumpas-Lenkc, K. (2020). Students' views on dialogue: Improving student engagement in the quality assurance. *Quality in Higher Education, 26*(1), 1-18.

Jacklin, A., & Riche, P. (2009). Reconceptualising student support: From 'support' to 'supportive'. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*, 735 - 749.

James, R., Krause, K. L., & Jennings, C. (2010). *The first year experience in Australian universities: Findings from 1994 to 2009*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.

Janosz, M. (2012). Outcomes of engagement and engagement as an outcome: Some consensus, divergences, and unanswered questions. In S. Christenson, A. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 695–703). Springer.

Järvelä S., & Renninger, K. A. (2014). Designing for learning: Interest, motivation, and engagement. In Sawyer K. (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of the learning sciences* (pp. 668–685). Cambridge University Press.

Jones, S. R., & Stewart, D. L. (2016). Evolution of student development theory. In E. S. Abes (Ed.), *New directions for student services: Critical perspectives on student development theory* (Vol. 154, pp. 1728). Jossey-Bass.

Junco, R., Heiberger, G., & Loken, E. (2011). The effect of Twitter on college student engagement and grades. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 27*, 119–132.

Kadiyono, A., & Liyani, A. (2019). Finding the gap: Student stress and student engagement of first-year undergraduate student from overseas. *Proceedings of the Proceedings of the 1st Sampoerna University-AFBE International Conference, SU-AFBE 2018, 6-7 December 2018*. Jakarta, Indonesia.

Kahn, P. (2014). Theorising student engagement in higher education. *British Educational Research Journal, 40*(6), 1005–1018.

Kahraman, M. (2023). Yükseköğretim kurumları özelinde öğrenci hareketliliği. *Current Perspectives in Social Sciences, 27*(3), 251-263.

Kahu, E. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 38*(5), 758–773.

Kahu, E. R., & Nelson, K. (2018). Student engagement in the educational ınterface: Understanding the mechanisms of student success. *Higher Education Research & Development, 37*, 58-71.

Kahu, E., Stephens, C., Leach, L., & Zepke, N. (2015). Linking academic emotions and student engagement: Mature-aged distance students' transition to university. *Journal of Further Higher Education, 39*, 481–497.

Kahu, E., Picton, C., & Nelson, K. (2019). Pathways to engagement: A longitudinal study of the first-year student experience in the educational interface. *Higher Education, 79*, 657-673.

Karabıyık, C. (2019). The relationship between student engagement and tertiary level English language learners' achievement. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET), 6*(2). 281-293.

Karadağ, E., & Yücel, C. (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). Türkiye üniversite memnuniyet araştırması. https://www.uniar.net/tuma.

Karadağ, E., & Yücel, C. (2020). Yeni tip koronavirüs pandemisi döneminde üniversitelerde uzaktan eğitim: lisans öğrencileri kapsamında bir değerlendirme çalışması. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi, 10*(2), 181-192.

Karadağ, E., & Yücel, C. (2024). *Öğrenci dostu üniversite şehirleri araştırması.* https://www.uniar.net/odus.

Karakhanyan, S., & Stensaker, B. (Eds.). (2020). *Global trends in higher education quality assurance: Challenges and opportunities in internal and external quality assurance* (Vol. 48). Brill Sense.

Karataş-Acer, E., & Güçlü, N. (2017). Türkiye'de yükseköğretimin genişlemesi: Gerekçeler ve ortaya çıkan sorunlar. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi, 7*(1), 28-38.

Kavak, Y. (2011). Türkiye'de yükseköğretimde büyüme: Yakın geçmişe bakış ve uzun vadeli (2010–2050) büyüme projeksiyonları. *Yükseköğretim Dergisi, 1*(2), 95–102.

Kay, J., Dunne, E., & Hutchinson, J. (2010). *Rethinking the values of higher education-students as change agents?* QAA.

Kaya-Kaşıkcı, S., & Glass, C. R. (2024). Analyzing the influence of regional security on international student flows in the MENA region: A social network approach. *Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01236-8.

Keenan, C. (2014). *Mapping student-led peer learning in the UK. Higher Education Academy.* Retrieved from www.heacademy.ac.uk/ knowledge- hub/ mapping-student- led- peer- learning- uk.

Kember, D. (2004). Interpreting student workload and the factors which shape students' perceptions of their workload. *Studies in Higher Education, 29*(2), 165–184.

Kenny M. E., & Donaldson, G. A. (1991). Contributions of parental attachment and family structure to the social and psychological functioning of first-year college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*, 479–486.

Keppell, M., & Carless, D. (2006). Learning-oriented assessment: A technology-based case study. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice 13*(2), 179–191.

Kerr, C. (2001). *The uses of the university*. Harvard University Press.

Kete Tepe, N., & Özer, Y. (2020). Üniversite öğrencilerinin yoksulluk algısı üzerine nitel bir araştırma. *Uluslararası Yönetim Akademisi Dergisi, 3*(1), 166-188.

Khademi Ashkzari, M., Piryaei, S., & Kamelifar, L. (2018). Designing a causal model for fostering academic engagement and verification of its effect on educational performance. *International Journal of Psychology (IPA), 12*(1), 136–161.

Kılınç, A. Ç., Çepni, O., Kılcan, B., & Palaz, T. (2017). Öğretim üyelerinin görüşlerine göre Türkiye'de yeni kurulan üniversitelerin sorunları: Nitel bir araştırma. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 2*, 282-293.

Kırlıoğlu, M., & Özdemir, E. (2023). Çalışan üniversite öğrencilerinin deneyimleri: Niteliksel bir çalışma. *Sosyal Çalışma Dergisi, 7*(2), 42-58.

King P. (2009). Principles of development and developmental change underlying theories of cognitive and moral development. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 597–620.

Klemenčič, M. (2020). Successful design of student-centered learning and teaching (SCLT) ecosystems in the European Higher Education Area. In S. Noorda, & P. Scott, & M. Vukasovic (Eds.) *In Bologna Process beyond 2020: Fundamental values of the EHEA - Proceedings of the 1999-2019 Bologna Process Anniversary Conference* (pp. 43-60).

Klemenčič, M., & Hoidn, S. (2020). Beyond student-centered classrooms: A Comprehensive approach to student-centered learning and teaching through student-centered ecosystems framework. In S. Hoidn and M. Klemenčič (Eds.), *Routledge international handbook on student-centred learning and teaching in higher education*. Routledge.

Knefelkamp, L., Widick, C., & Parker, C. (Eds.) *Applying new developmental findings: New directions for student services* (No.4). Josey-Bass.

Knowles, M. (1983). Andragogy: An emerging technology for adult learning. In M. Tight (Ed.), *Adult learning and education* (Vol. 1, pp. 53–70). Routledge.

Korkut, H. (2002). *Sorgulanan yükseköğretim*. Nobel Yayınları.

Korobova, N, & Starobin, S. S. (2015). A comparative study of student engagement, satisfaction, and academic success among international and American students. *Journal of International Students, 5*(1), 72–85.

Korucuk, M. (2023). Üniversite öğrencilerinin akademik, sosyo-kültürel ve ekonomik sorunları: Fotoses uygulaması. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi (AUJEF), 7*(4), 1260-1287.

Koyuncuoğlu, D. (2023). Gelecek nesil üniversiteler: Bir model önerisi, *Five Zero, 3*(1), 127-145.

Koyuncuoğlu, Ö. (2021). An investigation of academic motivation and career decidedness among university students. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES), 7*(1), 125-143.

Krause, K. L. (2012). Addressing the wicked problem of quality in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(3), 285–297.

Krause, K. L., & Coates, H. (2008). Students' engagement in first-year university. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 33*(5), 493–505.

Kromydas, T. (2017). Rethinking higher education and its relationship with social inequalities: past knowledge, present state and future potential. *Palgrave Commun 3*(1), 1.

Kruschwitz, C. (2010). Public spaces of universities: Types of forms and their urban significances. *Proceedings of the 17th International Seminar on Urban Form (August, 20-23, 2010).* Institut Für Geographie.

Kuh, G. D. (1995) The other curriculum: Out-of-class experiences associated with student learning and personal development. *Journal of Higher Education. 66*(2), 123–155.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the National Survey of Student Engagement. *Change, 33*, (3), 10-17.

Kuh, G. D. (2003). What we're learning about student engagement from NSSE: Benchmarks for effective educational practices. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 35*(2), 24–32.

Kuh, G. D. (2005). Putting student engagement results to use: Lessons from the field. *Assessment Update, 17*(1), 12-13.

Kuh, G.D. (2009a) The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 141* (Spring 2009), 5–20.

Kuh, G. D. (2009b). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 683–706.

Kuh, G., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 79*, 540–563.

Kuh, G. D., & Hu, S. (2001). The effects of student– faculty interaction in the 1990s. *Review of Higher Education, 24*(3), 309– 332.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J. L., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2006). *What matters to student success: A review of the literature, volume 8*. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H. and Whitt, E. J. (2005) Never let it rest: Lessons about student success from high-performing colleges and universities. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning. 37*(4), 44–51.

Küçükcan, T., & Gür, B. S. (2009). *Türkiye'de yükseköğretim: Karşılaştırmalı bir analiz*. SETA, Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı.

Kürtül, N., Efendioğlu, A., & Yanpar, T. (2021). The adaptation of student engagement scale in higher education. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, 13*(3), 3197-3211.

Lairio, M., Puukari, S., & Kouvo, A. (2013). Studying at university as part of student life and identity construction. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 57,* 115 - 131.

LaNasa, S. M., Olson, E., & Alleman, N. (2007). The impact of on-campus student growth on first-year student engagement and success. *Research in Higher Education, 48*(8), 941-966.

Lansdown, G., 2011. *Every child's right to be heard. A resource guide on the UN committee on the rights of the child general comment*, 12. Retrieved from: www. unicef.org/ french/ adolescence/ files/ Every_ Childs_ Right_ to_ be_ Heard.pdf.

Larkham, P. (2000). Institutions and urban form: The example of universities. *Urban Morphology 4*(2), 63-77

Lawson, M., & Lawson, H. (2013). New conceptual frameworks for student engagement research, policy and practice. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(3), 432–479.

Lea, J. (2015). *Enhancing learning and teaching in higher education: Engaging with the dimensions of practice*. Open University Press.

Leach, L. (2014). *Exploring discipline differences in student engagement in one institution*. Unpublished paper.

Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 22*(4), 557-584.

Levine, A. (2018). Privatization in higher education. In *Privatizing education* (pp. 133-148). Routledge.

Lewis, A., & Smith, D. (1993). Defining higher order thinking. *Theory into Practice, 32*(3), 131-137.

Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2009). Student participation in university governance: The role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(1), 69-84.

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding D. T., & Voegtle K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice.* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Long, D. (2012). Theories and models of student development. In *Environments for student growth and development: librarians and student affairs in collaboration*, (Eds.) L. J. Hinchliffe and M. A. Wong, 41–55. Association of College & Research Libraries.

Lounsbury, J. W., Richardson, J. D., Saudargas, R. A., & Levy, J. J. (2008). An investigation of extracurricular activities in relation to sense of identity of college freshmen. *Journal of College Orientation and Transition, 15*(2), 47-55.

Louwrens, N., & Hartnett, M. (2015). Student and teacher perceptions of online student engagement in an online middle school. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning, 19*(1), 27.

Lowe, H., & Cook, A. (2003). Mind the gap: Are students prepared for higher education? *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 27*(1), 53-76.

Lowe, T., & Dunne, E. (2017). Setting the scene for the REACT programme: Aims, challenges and the way ahead. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change, 3*(1), 24– 39.

Lowe, T., & El-Hakim, Y. (2020). A handbook for student engagement in higher education. In: J. Wisdom (Eds.), *The Staff and Educational Development Series*. Routledge.

Lubicz-Nawrocka, T., & Bovill, C. (2021). Do students experience transformation through co-creating curriculum in higher education? *Teaching in Higher Education, 28*(1), 1–17.

Lutz, C. A., & Collins, J. L. (1983). *Reading national geographic*. University of Chicago Press.

Ma, J., Han, X., Yang, J., & Cheng, J. (2015). Examining the necessary condition for engagement in an online learning environment based on learning analytics approach: The role of the instructor. *The Internet and Higher Education, 24*, 26-34.

Mann, S. (2001). Alternative perspectives on the student experience: Alienation and engagement. *Studies in Higher Education, 26*(1), 7–19.

Mannan, M. A. (2007). Student attrition and academic and social integration: Application of Tinto's model at the University of Papua New Guinea. *Higher Education, 53*(2), 147-165.

Marie, J., Arif, M., & Joshi, T. (2016). UCL Change Makers projects: Supporting staff/ student partnership on educational enhancement projects. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, *1*(1), 351-393.

Marie, J. and Azuma, F. (2018). Partnership support for departments with low student satisfaction. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal, 2*(1), 70– 77.

Maroco, J., Maroco, A. L., Campos, J. A. D. B., & Fredricks, J. A. (2016). University student's engagement: Development of the university student engagement inventory (USEI). *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica, 29*(21), 1-12.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Sage Publications.

Martin, F., Stamper, B., & Flowers, C. (2020). Examining student perception of readiness for online learning: Importance and confidence. *Online Learning, 24*(2), 38–58.

Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 46*(1), 4–11.

Matthews, K. E. (2016). Students as partners as the future of student engagement. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal, 1*(1), 1-5.

Matthews, K. E., Dwyer, A., Hine, L., & Turner, J. (2018). Conceptions of students as partners. *Higher Education, 76*(6), 957– 971.

May, T. (2006). Universities: Space, governance and transformation, *Social Epistemology, 20*(3-4), 333-345. Doi: 10.1080/02691720600847340.

Mayhew, M. J. (2012). A multi-level examination of college and its influence on ecumenical worldview. *Research in Higher Education, 53*(3), 282–310.

Mayhew, M., Rockenbach, A., Bowman, N., Seifert, T., & Wolniak, G. (2016). *How College affects students: 21st century evidence that higher education works*. (Vol. 3). Jossey-Bass.

Mazer, J. P. (2012). Development and validation of the student interest and engagement scales. *Communication Methods and Measures, 6*(2), 99-125.

Mazer, J. P. (2013). Validity of the student interest and engagement scales: Associations with student learning outcomes. *Communication Studies, 64*, 125-140.

McCune, V. (2017). Experienced academics' pedagogical development in higher education: time, technologies, and conversations. *Oxford Review of Education, 44*(3), 307–321.

McGowan, H. M., & Gunderson, B. K. (2010). A randomized experiment exploring how certain features of clicker use effect undergraduate students' engagement and learning in statistics. *Technology Innovations in Statistics Education, 4*(1), 1-29.

McInnis, C. (2003). New realities of the student experience: How should universities respond? *The European Association for Institutional Research*. Limerick.

McLoughlin, C., & Luca, J. (2000). Cognitive engagement and higher order thinking through computer conferencing: We know why but do we know how? In *Proceedings of the 9th Annual Teaching Learning Forum*. Curtin University of Technology.

Mercer-Mapstone, L. (2019). The student– staff partnership movement: Striving for inclusion as we push sectorial change. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 1– 13.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Mızıkacı, F. (2010). Isomorphic and diverse institutions among Turkish foundation universities. *Eğitim ve Bilim, 157*, 128–139.

Milburn-Shaw, H., & Walker, D. (2017). The politics of student engagement. *Politics, 37*, 52 - 66.

Milem J. F., & Berger J. B. (1997). A modified model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between Astin's theory of involvement and Tinto's theory of student departure. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*, 387–400.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Mischler, E. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. *Harvard Educational Review, 60*(4), 415-442.

Moges, B. T., Gebremeskel, M. M., Tilwani, S. A., & Assefa, Y. (2024). Student engagement in a differentiated higher education system in Ethiopia: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, *00*(0), 1-14. Doi:10.1108/jarhe-11-2023-0507.

Moore, T., & Morton, J. (2017). The myth of job readiness? Written communication, employability, and the 'skills gap' in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(3), 591– 609.

Moreau, M. P., & Leathwood, C. (2006). Graduates' employment and the discourse of employability: A critical analysis. *Journal of Education and Work, 19*(4), 305 –24.

Morris, D. (2018). Beyond student satisfaction: Student voice, student engagement, and quality learning in Ellis, R. and Hogard, E. (eds.), *Handbook of Quality Assurance for University Teaching*. Routledge.

Moscardini, A. O., Strachan, R., & Vlasova, T. (2022). The role of universities in modern society. *Studies in Higher Education, 47*(4), 812–830.

Muijs, D. (2012). Surveys and sampling. In Briggs, A.R., Morrison, M. and Coleman, M. (eds.), *Research methods in educational leadership and management*. Sage Publications.

National Research Council & Institute of Medicine. (2004). *Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn*. National Academies Press.

Neal, R. J. (2010). *Student engagement and its relationship to student attrition: A descriptive study of first-time, full-time eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old community college students at American River College.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. La Verne University.

Neary, M., & Winn, J., 2009. Student as producer: reinventing the undergraduate curriculum, pp.192– 210. In: M. Neary, H. Stevenson and L. Bell (eds.), *The future of higher education: policy, pedagogy and the student experience.* Continuum.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). (2019). *University of Indiana.* https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/.

National Union of Students (NUS). (2012). *A manifesto for partnership.* www.nusconnect.org.uk/ resources/ a- manifesto- for- partnership/.

Neary, M. (2016). Raised voices: From student engagement to political engagement. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal, 1*(1), 1–5.

Newbold, J. J., Mehta, S. S., & Forbus, P. (2011). Commuter students: Involvement and identification with an institution of higher education. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 15*(2), 141.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2024). *Education at a glance: Student—teacher ratio and average class size.* https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/students-per-teaching-staff.html.

Oğuz, A. (2002). Üniversitelerdeki öğretim elemanlarının yabancı dili geliştirme güçlükleri. *Eğitim ve Bilim, 27*(125), 17-27.

Ortaylı, İ. (2001). *Gelenekten geleceğe*. Ufuk Yayınları.

Owen, D. (2013). Students engaged in academic subject review. In: Dunne, E. and Owen, D. (eds.), *Student engagement handbook: Practice in higher education*. Emerald Group Publishing.

ÖSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center). (2023). *Üniversite sınavına ilişkin sayısal veriler*. https://www.osym.gov.tr/TR,13046/2017.html.

ÖSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center). (2024*). Hafta sonu 3 milyondan fazla aday YKS'ye girecek.* https://www.osym.gov.tr/TR,29437/hafta-sonu-3-milyondan-fazla-aday-yksye-girecek-03062024.html.

Öz, Y. (2019). Yükseköğretimde öğrenci katılımı. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Anadolu University.

Özer, N., Atik, S., Şad, S. N. ve Kış, A. (2018). Turkish college students' trust in professors and engagement: I trust therefore I engage. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi, 24*(3), 553-578.

Özoğlu, M. (2011). Statükodan değişime: 21. yüzyılın başında yükseköğretim. In B. S. Gür (Ed.), *2000'li yıllar: Türkiye'de Eğitim* (pp. 125-161). Meydan.

Özoğlu, M., Gür., B. S., & Gümüş, S. (2016). Rapid expansion of higher education in Turkey: The challenges of recently established public universities (2006-2013). *Higher Education Policy, 29*(1), 21-39.

Pascarella, E. T. (1980). Student-faculty informal contact and college outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, *50*, 545-595.

Pascarella, E. T. (1985). Students' affective development within the college environment. *The Journal of Higher Education, 56*(6), 640-663.

Pascarella, E. T. (2001). Identifying excellence in undergraduate education: Are we even close? *Change, 33*(3), 18–23.

Pascarella, E. T., Seifert, T., & Blaich, C. (2010). How effective are the NSSE benchmarks in predicting important educational outcomes? *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 42*(1), 16–22.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. Jossey-Bass.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. Jossey Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage.

Patton L. D., Renn K. A., Guido F. M., Quaye S. J. (2016). Student development in college: *Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Peck, L. (2017a). *The correlation between the national survey of student engagement indicators and first year student achievement, satisfaction, and retention.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Old Domininion University.

Peck A. (2017b). *Engagement and employability: Integrating career learning through cocurricular experiences in postsecondary education*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Pekrun, R., Gotz, T., Titz, W., & Perry, R. (2002). Positive emotions in education. In E. Frydenberg (Eds.), *Beyond coping: Meeting goals, visions, and challenges* (pp. 149–173). Oxford University Press.

Pekrun, R., & Linnenbrink-Garcia, L. (2012). Academic emotions and student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 97–132). Springer.

Perka, P. L., Matherly, C. A., Fishman, D. E., & Ridge, R. H. (1992). Using photographs to examine environmental perceptions of African-American and white Greek members: A qualitative study. *College Student Affairs Journal 12*(1), 7–16.

Perrin, A. J., & Gillis, A. (2019). How college makes citizens: Higher education experiences and political engagement. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 5*, 1–16.

Perry W. G. (1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Peterson, S. L., & Delmas, R. C. (2001). Effects of career decision-making self-efficacy and degree utility on student persistence: A path analytic study. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 3*(3), 285-299.

Picton, C., & Kahu, E. (2021). I knew I had the support from them: Understanding student support through a student engagement lens. *Higher Education Research & Development, 41*, 2034 - 2047.

Pike, G. R. (1999). The effects of residential learning communities and traditional residential living arrangements on educational gains during the first year of college. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(3), 269–284.

Pike, G. R., & Kuh, G. D. (2005a). A typology of student engagement for American colleges and universities. *Research in Higher Education, 46*, 185-209.

Pike G. R., & Kuh G. D. (2005b). First-and second-generation college students: A comparison of their engagement and intellectual development. *Journal of Higher Education*, *76*, 276–300.

Porter, S. (2006). Institutional structures and student engagement. *Research in Higher Education, 47*, 521-558.

Porter, S. R., Whitcomb, M. E., & Weitzer, W. H. (2004). Multiple surveys of students and survey fatigue. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 121*, 63– 73.

Reay, D., David, M. E., & Ball S. (2005). *Degrees of choice: social class, race and gender in higher education*. Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent.

Redecker, C. (2017). *European framework for the digital competence of educators*. Office of the European Union.

Reeve, J., & Tseng, C. M. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 36*(4), 257–267. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.05.002.

Reschly, A., & Christenson, S. (2012). Jingle, jangle and conceptual haziness: Evolution and future directions of the engagement construct. In S. Christenson, A. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 3–20). Springer.

Robb, M. K. (2004). *Factors that influence cognitive engagement and academic success of pre-licensure baccalaureate millennial nursing students*. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Robinson C. C., & Hullinger, H. (2008). New benchmarks in higher education: Student engagement in online learning. *Journal of Education for Business, 84*(2), 101-109.

Robinson, C. D., Lee, M. G., Dearing, E., & Rogers, T. (2018). Reducing student absenteeism in the early grades by targeting parental beliefs. *American Educational Research Journal, 55*(6), 1163–1192.

Rodgers, R. F. (1989). Student development. In U. Delworth & G. R. Hanson (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (2nd edition, pp. 117–164). Jossey-Bass.

Rogers, C. R. (1983). *Freedom to learn for the 80's*. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Rose, G. (2002). *Visual metholodogies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. Sage.

Ruohoniemi, M., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2009). Students' experiences concerning course workload and factors enhancing and impeding their learning – a useful resource for quality enhancement in teaching and curriculum planning. *International Journal for Academic Development, 14*(1), 69–81.

Rothwell, A., Herbert, I., & Rothwell, F. (2008). Self-perceived employability: Construction and initial validation of a scale for university students. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 73*, 1–12.

Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*(1), 54–67.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). (2012). *Quality code section B5: Student engagement.* Retrieved from www. qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Quality-Code- Chapter- B5.aspx#.VSEBn4hXerU

Sabri, D. (2011). What's wrong with 'the student experience'?. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 32*(5), 657–667.

Saichaie, K., & Morphew, C. C. (2014) What college and university websites reveal about the purposes of higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 85*(4), 499-530. Doi: 10.1080/00221546.2014.11777338.

Salas-Pilco, S. Z., Yang, Y., & Zhang, Z. (2022). Student engagement in online learning in Latin American higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 53*(3), 593-619.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Salihoğlu, T., Salihoğlu, G., Özyılmaz Küçükyağcı, P. & Yıldız, M. (2021). Kampüs tasarımının öğrencilerin kampüs yaşamının kalitesine etkisi: Gebze Teknik Üniversitesi Çayırova Kampüsü master planı örneği. *Kent Akademisi, 14*(4), 975-994.

Sandberger, J. U., & Lind, G. (1979). The outcomes of university education: Some empirical findings on aims and expectations in The Federal Republic of Germany. *Higher Education, 8*, 179–203.

Sanders, M., & George, A. (2017). Viewing the changing world of educational technology from a different perspective: Present realities, past lessons, and future possibilities, *Education and Information Technologies, 22*(6), 2915–2933.

Sarwar, M., & Ashrafi, G. M. (2014). Students' commitment, engagement and locus of control as predictor of academic achievement at higher education level. *Current Issues in Education, 17*(3), 1-10.

Schaufeli,W. B., Salanova, M., González- Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3*(1), 71–92.

Schuetz, P. (2008). A theory-driven model of community college student engagement. Community College. *Journal of Research and Practice, 32*, 305–24.

Scott G., Coates H., & Anderson M. (2008). *Learning leaders in times of change: Academic leadership capabilities for Australian higher education.* University of Western Sydney.

Selwyn, N. (2016). Digital downsides: Exploring university students' negative engagements with digital technology. *Teaching in Higher Education, 21*(8), 1006–1021.

Senior, C., Moores, E., & Burgess, A. P. (2017). I can't get no satisfaction: Measuring student satisfaction in the age of a consumerist higher education. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, 980.

Shaw, C., & Atvars, T. (2018). Two sides of the same coin: a university and student union perspective on partnership and risk. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education, 1*(24), 6.

Shaw, C., Humphrey, O., Atvars, T., & Sims, S. (2017). Who they are and how to engage them: A summary of the REACT systematic literature review of the 'hard to reach' in higher education. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change, 3*(1), 51– 64.

Shirley, D., & Hargreaves, A. (2021). *Five paths of student engagement: Blazing the trail to learning and success*. Solution Tree Press.

Sıramkaya, S. B., & Çınar, K. (2012). Üniversite kampüs yerleşkelerinde ortak kullanim mekânlarinin incelenmesi: Selçuk Üniversitesi Aleaddin Keykubat Kampüsü örneği. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Mühendislik, Bilim ve Teknoloji Dergisi, 27*(2), 61-72.

Sims, S., King, S., Lowe, T., & El Hakim, Y., 2016. Evaluating partnership and impact in the first year of the Student Fellows Scheme, *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change, 2*(1), 1-18.

Sinatra, G., Benjamin, C., Lombardi, H., & Lombardi, D. (2015). The challenges of defining and measuring student engagement in science. *Educational Psychologist, 50*(1), 1–13.

Skinner, E. A., Furrer, C., Marchand, G., & Kindermann, T. (2008). Engagement and disaffection in the classroom: Part of a larger motivational dynamic? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*, 765-781.

Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 21–44). Springer Science + Business Media.

Smith, K. A., Sheppard, S. D., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2005). Pedagogies of engagement: Classroom-based practices. *Journal of Engineering Education, 94*(1), 87–101.

Smith, K., Clegg, S., Lawrence, E., & Todd, M. J. (2007). The challenges of reflection: Students learning from work placements. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 44*, 131–141.

Snijders, I., Wijnia, L., Rikers, R., & Loyens, S. (2020). Building bridges in higher education: Student-faculty relationship quality, student engagement, and student loyalty. *International Journal of Educational Research, 100*, 101538. Doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101538.

Solomonides, I., & Reid, A. (2009). Understanding the relationships between student identity and engagement with studies. *In The Student Experience: Proceedings of the 32nd HERDSA Annual Conference*. Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia.

Solomonides, I., Reid, A., & Petocz, P. (2012). A relational model of student engagement. In I. Solomonides, A. Reid & P. Petocz (Eds.), *Engaging with learning in higher education* (pp. 11–24). Libri Publishing.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. The Guilford Press.

Stes, A., Min-Leliveld, M., Gijbels, D., & Van Petegem, P. (2010). The impact of instructional development in higher education: The state-of-the-art of the research. *Educational Research Review, 5*, 25–49.

Stevenson J., & Clegg, S. (2012). Who cares? Gender dynamics in the valuing of extra-curricular activities in higher education. *Gender and Education, 24*(1), 41-55.

Stoney, C., & Oliver, R. (1999). Can higher order thinking and cognitive engagement be enhanced with multimedia? *Interactive Multimedia Electronic Journal of Computer- Enhanced Learning, 1*(2), 7.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2016). *Student development theory in higher education: A social psychological approach*. Routledge Taylor & Francis.

Sung, M., & Yang, S. U. (2008). Toward the model of university image: The influence of brand personality, external prestige, and reputation, *Journal of Public Relations Research, 20*(4), 357–376.

Sunshine Hillygus, D. (2005). The MISSING LINK: Exploring the relationship between higher education and political engagement. *Political Behavior, 27*, 25–47.

Şenol, E. (2020). Türkiye'de coğrafya bölümlerine yönelik öğrenci hareketliliğinin sebepleri ve yönü üzerine genel değerlendirme. *Amasya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 8,* 145-184.

Şenses, F. (2007). *Uluslararası gelişmeler ışığında Türkiye yükseköğretim sistemi: Temel eğilimler, sorunlar, çelişkiler ve öneriler* (pp. 1-31). ODTÜ (METU) Economic Research Center.

Tam, M. (2002). University impact on student growth: A quality measure. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 24*(2), 211– 218.

Tanaka, M. (2019). *Student engagement and quality assurance in higher education: International collaborations for the enhancement of learning*. Routledge.

Taylor, E. W. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005), *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 26*(2), 173–191.

Tekeli, İ. (2010). *Tarihsel bağlamı içinde Türkiye'de yükseköğretim ve YÖK'ün tarihi*. Tarih Vakfı Yurt.

Tekerek, T. (2023). *Taşra üniversiteleri*. İletişim Yayınları.

Tekneci, P. D. (2016). Evolution of Turkish higher education system in the last decade. *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 6*(3), 277-287.

Terenzini P. T. (1987). *A review of selected theoretical models of student development and collegiate impact.* In the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Baltimore.

Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., & Blimling, G. S. (1996). Students' out-of-class experiences and their influence on learning and cognitive development: A literature review. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*(2), 149–162.

Terrel, S. R., & Dringus, L. (2000). An investigation of the effect of learning style on student success in an online learning environment. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 28*(1), 231-238.

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In C. Willig and S. Rogers (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Thomas, L. (2012). *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change: Final report from the what works? student retention and success project*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Higher Education Funding Council for England, The Higher Education Academy and Action on Access.

Thurmond, V. A., & Wambach, K. (2004) Understanding interactions in distance education: A review of the literature. *Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, 1*, 9-33.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: what next? *College Student Retention, 8*(1), 1– 20.

Tinto, V. (2010). From theory to action: Exploring the institutional conditions for student retention. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 51–89). Springer.

Tison, E. B., Bateman, T., & Culver, S. M. (2009). Examination of the gender–student engagement relationship at one university. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 36*(1), 27–49.

Todorovski, B., Nordal, E., & Isoski, T. (2015). *Overview on student-centered learning in higher education in Europe: Research study*. The European Students' Union.

Tomlinson, M. (2008). The degree is not enough: Students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability. *British Journal of Sociology of Education 29*(1), 49– 61.

Toutkoushian, R. K., & Smart, J. C. (2001). Do institutional characteristics affect student gains from college? *Review of Higher Education: Journal of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, 25*(1), 39–61.

Trinidad, J. E., Raz, M. D., & Magsalin, I. M. (2023). "More than professional skills": Student perspectives on higher education's purpose. *Teaching in Higher Education, 28*(6), 1380–1394.

Trowler, V. (2010). Student engagement literature review. *The Higher Education Academy, 11*, 1–15.

Trowler, V., & Trowler, P. (2010). *Student engagement evidence summary*. The Higher Education Academy.

Türk, M. (2022). *Measuring online student engagement in higher education: Scale development, validation, and psychometric properties.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Oklahoma, The United States.

Tymon, A. (2013). The student perspective on employability. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(6), 841-856.

Uğur, E. & Akın, A. (2015). The psychometric properties of Turkish version of the student engagement scale. *SDU International Journal of Educational Studies, 2*(1), 53-59.

Uludağ, G., Bora M., & Çatal, S. (2021a). Türk yükseköğretiminde kalite güvencesi sistemi ve öğrenci katılımının önemi. *Kalite ve Strateji Yönetimi Dergisi, 1*(1), 91-111.

Uludağ, G., Bardakcı, S., Avşaroğlu, M. D., Çankaya, F., Çatal, S., Ayvat, F., Koçer, A., Aksu Yıldırım, S., & Elmas, M. (2021b). Investigation of the higher education students' participation in quality assurance processes based on the theory of planned behaviour: A case of Turkey. *Quality in Higher Education*, *27*(3), 338-356. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2021.1946273.

Umbach, P., & Wawrzynski, M. (2005). Faculty do matter: the role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education, 46*, 153-184.

UNESCO (2022, May). UNESCO Higher education global data report. https://www.whec2022.org/EN/homepage/whec2022-resources.

Usher, R., Bryant, I., & Johnston, R. (1997). *Adult education and the postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits*. Routledge.

Valenzuela S., Park N., &Kee K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site?: Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 14*, 875-901.

Veiga, F. H. (2016). Assessing student engagement in school: Development and validation of a four-dimensional scale. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 217*(2), 813 – 819.

Vuori, J. (2013). Student engagement: Buzzword of fuzzword? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 36*(5), 509– 519.

Yolvermez, B., & Kaytan, M. (2022). Covid-19 pandemisinde derinleşen öğrenci yoksulluğu: Sakarya Üniversitesi örneği. *Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi, 12*(3), 1755-1776.

Wanner, T. (2015). Enhancing student engagement and active learning through just in- time teaching and the use of PowerPoint. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 27*(1), 154–163.

Watson, D., & Taylor, R. (1998). *Lifelong Learning and the University: A Post-Dearing Agenda*. Falmer Press.

Wentzel, K. (2012). Socio-cultural contexts, social competence, and engagement at school. In S. Christenson, A. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 479–488). Springer.

White, J. V. (2018). Engagement & employability: Integrating career learning through cocurricular experiences in postsecondary education. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 1–3.

Widick, C., & Simpson, D. (1978). Developmental concepts in college instruction. In C. Parker (Eds.), *Encouraging development in college students* (pp. 27-59). University of Minnesota Press.

Williford, M., Chapman, L. C., & Kahrig, T. (2000-2001). The university experience course: A longitudinal study of student performance, retention, and graduation. *Journal of College Student Retention, 2*(4), 327-340.

Wimpenny, K., & Savin-Baden, M. (2013). Alienation, agency and authenticity: A synthesis of the literature on student engagement. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(3), 311–326.

Wissema, J. G. (2009). *Towards the third-generation university: Managing the university in transition*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Wright, G. B. (2011). Student-centered learning in higher education. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 23*, 92–97.

World Bank (2020). Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary, both sexes (%) [data set]. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?locations.

Xerri, M. J., Radford, K., & Shacklock, K. (2018). Student engagement in academic activities: A social support perspective. *Higher Education, 75*(4), 589–605.

Yakar, M., Yılmaz, B., & Eteman, F. S. (2020). Türkiye'de yüksek öğrenim öğrenci hareketliliği coğrafyaları: Yüksek öğrenime geciş üzerine ampirik bir analiz. *The Migration Conference 2020 Book of Abstracts and Programme*.

Yang J., Schneller C., Roche S. (2015). *The role of higher education in promoting lifelong learning*. UIL.

Yazzie-Mintz, E., & McCormick, K. (2012). Finding the humanity in the data: Understanding, measuring, and strengthening student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wiley (Eds.), Handbook of research on student engagement (pp. 743–761). Springer.

Yebei, P. K. (2011). *Examining the co-curricular engagement of international students at a public four-year university*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Indiana University.

Yetim, U. (2003). The impacts of individualism/collectivism, self-esteem, and feeling of mastery on life satisfaction among the Turkish university students and academicians. *Social Indicators Research, 61*, 297-317.

Yıldırım, S. & Adnan, M. (2019). Turkey-commentary. In Zawacki-Richter, O. & Qayyum, A. eds. *Open and Distance Education in Asia, Africa and the Middle East National Perspectives in a Digital Age*. Springer Open.

Yıldırım, G., Sökmen, Y., Taş, Y., & Dilekmen, M. (2016). *Öğrenci katılım ölçeğinin Türkçe'ye uyarlanması: Geçerlik ve güvenirlik çalışması*. XV. Uluslararası Katılımlı Sınıf Öğretmenliği Eğitimi Sempozyumu (11-14 Mayıs, 2016), USOS 2016 Özel Sayısı, 68-79.

Yıldız, S., & Gizir, S. (2018). Öğretim üyelerinin üniversite, akademisyenlik ve bilimsel araştırma kavramlarına ilişkin algılarının metaforlar aracılığıyla incelenmesi. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 33*(3), 743-762.

Yıldız, B. Y., Çil, E., & Can, I. (2015). Kampüs morfolojisi: Bir yaşam alanı olarak üniversite yerleşkelerinin analizi. *Türkiye Kentsel Morfoloji Ağı*, 368-386.

Yılmaz-Özelçi, S., & Eliüşük-Bülbül, A. (2018). Üniversite öğrencilerinin okula bağlanma düzeylerinin yordayıcısı olarak iyi-oluş düzeyleri. *Turkish Studies, 13*(4), 1385-1396.

Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Yorke, M. (2006). Student engagement: Deep, surface or strategic? *The Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference. Griffith University*. Gold Coast Campus, Australia.

Yorke, M., & Longden, B. (2008). *The first year experience of higher education in the UK: Final report.* https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/fyefinalreport_1.pdf.

YÖKAK (2023a, September 6). *Üniversite izleme ve değerlendirme genel raporu*. https://www.yok.gov.tr/Documents/Yayinlar/Yayinlarimiz/2023/2023-universite-izleme-ve-degerlendirme-genel-raporu.pdf.

YÖKAK (2023b, September 6). *Yükseköğretim kalite kurulu: Öğrenci katılımı.* https://yokak.gov.tr/ogrenci-komisyonu/ogrenci-katilimi.

Zanten, A.V. (2005). Bourdieu as education policy analyst and expert: A rich but ambiguous legacy. *Journal of Education Policy, 20*(6), 671– 686.

Zepke, N. (2013). Student engagement: A complex business supporting the first year experience in tertiary education. *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 4*(2).

Zepke, N. (2017). *Student engagement in neoliberal times: Theories and practices for learning and teaching in higher education* (E-book). Springer. Doi: 10.1007/978-981-10-3200-4.

Zepke, N. (2018). Learning with peers, active citizenship and student engagement in enabling education. *Student Success, 9*(1), 61–73. https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.v9i1.433.

Zepke, N., & Leach, L. (2010). Improving student engagement: Ten proposals for action. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 11*, 167-177.

Zepke, N., Leach, L., & Butler, P. (2014). Student engagement: Students' and teachers' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development, 33*(2), 386–398.

Zhang, L. F., & Watkins, D. (2001). Cognitive development and student approaches to learning: An investigation of Perry's theory with Chinese and US university students. *Higher Education, 41*(3), 239–261.

Zhao, C. M., Kuh, G. D., & Carini, R. M. (2005). A comparison of international student and American student engagement in effective educational practices. *The Journal of Higher Education, 76*(2), 209–231.

Zhoc, K. C. H., King, R. B., Chung, T. S. H., & Chen, J. (2020). Emotionally intelligent students are more engaged and successful: Examining the role of emotional intelligence in higher education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 35*(4), 839–863.

A. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORM (IN TURKISH)

Bölüm 1: Kişisel Bilgiler

1. Cinsiyet:
2. Doğum yılı:
3. Devam edilen üniversite:
4. Bölüm
5. Sınıf:
6. Genel akademik not ortalaması (GANO):
7. Mezun Olunan Lise:
8. Memleket:
9. Kalınan yer:
10. Ailenizde sizin dışınızda üniversite okumuş olanlar:

Bölüm 2: Görüşme Soruları

1. Bir üniversite öğrencisi olarak "üniversite" denince aklınıza ne geliyor? Yani bir "üniversite" tanımı yapacak olsanız neler söylersiniz?
2. Üniversite okuduğunuz şehri düşündüğünüzde çeşitli yönleriyle nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

Akademik Deneyim

3. Üniversitenizde bulunduğunuz zamanı düşündüğünüzde eğitim ve öğretim deneyiminizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

a) Üniversite aldığınız derslerin içeriklerini ve işlenişlerini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

b) Üniversitenizde akademik performansınıza yönelik yapılan geri bildirim ve değerlendirme mekanizmaları hakkında neler söylersiniz?

c)Üniversitede çevrim içi öğrenme ve öğretme deneyimizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

d)Üniversitenizin sunduğu basılı ve elektronik akademik kaynakları nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

4. Eğitim-öğretim anlamında üniversite deneyiminizi düşündüğünüzde üniversitenizin akademik gelişimize katkısını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

Bireysel Deneyim

5. Üniversitede bulunduğunuz zamanı düşündüğünüzde bireysel deneyiminizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

a) Üniversitede kişisel işlerinizi yönetme deneyiminizi (yurt işleri, ev işleri, alışveriş, sağlık ihtiyaçları, bütçe yönetimi, vb.) nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

b) Üniversite tecrübenizin günlük yaşama dair basit ve karmaşık soruları çözme konusundaki katkısı hakkında neler söylersiniz?

c) Üniversitede akademik olmayan sorumlulukları (aile ilişkileri, maddi gelir, iş) yerine getirme konusundaki deneyiminiz hakkında neler söylersiniz?

6.Üniversitenizin kendinizi anlamak açısından kişisel gelişiminize katkısını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

Sosyal Deneyim

7. Kampüs içi yaşam deneyiminiz hakkında konuşmak isterim. Bu bağlamda üniversite bulunduğunuz dönemi düşündüğünüzde sosyal yaşam deneyiminizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

a) Üniversitenizdeki kültürel etkinlikler, spor faaliyetleri, eğlence ve rahatlama etkinliklerini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

b) Konaklama ve yeme/içme olanakları hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

c) Kampüs güvenliği hakkında ne söylersiniz?

d) Kampüse ulaşım hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

e) Kampüs içindeki iletişimi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

f) Üniversitenizdeki öğrenci toplulukları/öğrenci grupları hakkında neler söylersiniz?

8. Üniversitenizin sosyal gelişiminize katkısını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

9. Öğrenci deneyiminizi akademik açıdan daha iyi hale getirmek için üniversite yönetiminizden beklentileriniz nelerdir?

10. Öğrenci deneyiminizi psikolojik açıdan daha iyi hale getirmek için üniversite yönetiminizden beklentileriniz nelerdir?
11. Öğrenci deneyiminizi sosyal açıdan daha iyi hale getirmek için üniversite yönetiminizden beklentileriniz nelerdir?
12. Şu ana kadarki üniversite deneyimizi 1 en düşük, 10 en yüksek olarak puanlayacak olsanız kaç verirsiniz? Neden?

B. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORM (IN ENGLISH)

Part 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender:
2. Year of birth:
3. University attended:
4. Department:
5. Grade level:
6. Cumulative academic grade point average (cGPA):
7. Graduated High School:
8. Hometown:
9. Place of stay:
10. Those in your family who studied at university other than you:

Part 2: Interview Questions

1. As a university student, what comes to your mind when you hear the word "university"? So, if you define the term of "university", what would you say?
2. When you think about the city where you have studied, how do you evaluate its various aspects?

Academic Experience

3. When you think about your time at your university, how do you evaluate your education and instruction experience?

    a) How do you evaluate the content and teaching strategies of the courses you took at university?

    b) What would you say about the feedback and evaluation mechanisms for your academic performance at your university?

    c)How do you evaluate our online learning and teaching experience at the university?

d) How do you evaluate the printed and electronic academic resources offered by your university?

4. When you think about your university experience in terms of education, how do you evaluate the contribution of your university to our academic development?

Individual Experience

5. When you think back to your time at university, how do you evaluate your individual experience?

a) How do you evaluate your experience of managing your personal affairs at university (dorm duties, housework, shopping, health needs, budget management, etc.)?

b) What would you say about the contribution of your university experience to solving simple and complex problems about daily life?

c) What would you say about your experience in handling non-academic responsibilities (family relationships, financial income, work) at university?

6. How do you evaluate the contribution of your university to your personal development in terms of understanding yourself?

Social Experience

7. I would like to talk about your on-campus living experience. In this context, when you think about your time at university, how do you evaluate your social life experience?

a) How do you evaluate the cultural events, sports activities, entertainment and relaxation activities at your university?

b) What do you think about accommodation and food/beverage opportunities?

c) What would you say about campus security?

d) What do you think about transportation to campus?

e) How do you evaluate the communication on campus?

f) What would you say about the student clubs/student communities at your university?

8. How do you evaluate the contribution of your university to your social development?

9. What do you expect from your university administration to improve your student experience academically?

10. What do you expect from your university administration to make your student experience better psychologically?

11. What do you expect from your university administration to make your student experience better socially?

12. If you rate your university experience so far with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how many points do you give? Why?

C. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

T.C.
ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı

Sayı : 54850036-044-E.291
Konu : Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB -
Araştırma İzni

DAĞITIM YERLERİNE

Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması doktora programı öğrencisi Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB, Doç. Dr. Serap EMİL'in danışmanlığında yürütmekte olduğu *"Öğrenci Katılımı: Türkiye'deki Yükseköğretim Kurumlarına Yönelik Bir Çerçeve"* başlıklı tez çalışması kapsamında veri toplaması için izin talebinde bulunmuştur.

Öğrencimiz Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB'ın 20 Mart 2022 - 01 Şubat 2024 tarihleri arasında Üniversiteniz öğrencilerinden anket yoluyla veri toplanması için görevlendirilmesi, Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Başkanlığı'nın görüşü ve İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'nun 0163-ODTUİAEK-2022 protokol numarası ile uygun görülerek onaylanmıştır.

Uygulamanın yapılabilmesi için gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

Saygılarımla.

e-imzalıdır
Prof. Dr. Tülin GENÇÖZ
Rektör Yardımcısı

EKLER :
1- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Danışman Dilekçe.pdf
2- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Etik Kurul Onayı.pdf
3- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Görüşme Formu.pdf
4- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Öğrenci Dilekçe.pdf
5- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Örnek Gönüllü Katılım Formu.pdf
6- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Taahhutname.pdf
7- Şahabettin AKŞAB_Tez Özeti.pdf

DAĞITIM :
ADIYAMAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE
ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE
RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE
UŞAK ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE

Bu belge 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununa göre güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Belge Doğrulama Kodu :
https://ebys.metu.edu.tr/verifyrecord/bg.aspx?id=78C035A1-B3AC-455B-8A3E-D3750BCF434E
DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800 ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY

Bilgi İçin: FATMA ÖZGÜN
Unvan: Bilgisayar İşletmeni
Telefon No: 03122103417
Eposta: ozgunf@metu.edu.tr

D. RESEARCH APPROVALS OF UNIVERSITIES

T.C.
RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ

Sayı : E-55568171-044-899 28.03.2022
Konu : Araştırma İzni

DAĞITIM YERLERİNE

İlgi : Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Rektörlüğünün (Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı) 25.03.2022 tarihli ve 54850036-044-E.291 sayılı yazısı.

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi doktora programı öğrencisi Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB'ın "Öğrenci Katılımı: Türkiye'deki Yükseköğretim Kurumlarına Yönelik Bir Çerçeve" başlıklı tez çalışması kapsamında anket uygulama talebi Rektörlüğümüzce uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerini ve gereğini arz/rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Ahmet İshak DEMİR
Rektör a.
Rektör Yardımcısı

Ek : İlgi Yazı ve Ekleri (9 Sayfa)

Dağıtım :
Gereği:
Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü

Bilgi:
Fakülteler
Yüksekokullar
Meslek Yüksekokulları
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğüne

Bu belge güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Belge Doğrulama Kodu : 4c52e9a5553e ***Belge Takip Adresi: http://ebys.erdogan.edu.tr/EBYS/eimzadogrulama***

Fener Mah. Zihni Derin Yerleşkesi 53100 Rize / TÜRKİYE
Telefon No :+90 (464) 223 61 26 Faks No :+90 (464) 223 53 76
e-Posta :rektorluk@erdogan.edu.tr İnternet Adresi:http://www.erdogan.edu.tr/
Kep Adresi:erdogan@hs01.kep.tr
Bilgi için : AYŞEGÜL GEDİK
Dahili: 1654

T.C.
ADIYAMAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Genel Sekreterlik

Sayı : E-16357079-044-55626
Konu : Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB - Araştırma İzni

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE
Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı

İlgi : 25.03.2022 tarihli ve 291 sayılı yazınız.

İlgide kayıtlı yazınıza istinaden, Üniversiteniz Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması Doktora öğrencisi Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB'ın, Doç. Dr. Serap EMİL'in danışmanlığında yürüteceği "Öğrenci Katılımı: Türkiye'deki Yükseköğretim Kurumlarına Yönelik Bir Çerçeve" başlıklı tez çalışması kapsamında veri toplama talebi Rektörlüğümüzce uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini arz ederim.

Prof. Dr. Cumhur KIRILMIŞ
Rektör a.
Rektör Yardımcısı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Belge Doğrulama Kodu :BSC4SNBL2C Belge Takip Adresi : https://turkiye.gov.tr/ebd?eK=5350&eD=BSC4SNBL2C&eS=55626
Adres:www.adiyaman.edu.tr
Telefon:04162233800 Faks:04162233812
E-Posta:genelsekreter@adiyaman.edu.tr Web Adresi:www.adiyaman.edu.tr
Bilgi için: İbrahim Halil AYDIN
Unvanı: Şef

T.C.
UŞAK ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Genel Sekreterlik

Sayı : E-33424009-044-71698 28.03.2022
Konu : Anket İzni (Arş.Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB)

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE
Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı

İlgi : 25.03.2022 tarihli ve 291 sayılı yazınız.

İlgi yazınıza istinaden; Üniversiteniz Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması doktora programı öğrencisi Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB, Doç. Dr. Serap EMİL'in danışmanlığında yürütmekte olduğu "Öğrenci Katılımı: Türkiye'deki Yükseköğretim Kurumlarına Yönelik Bir Çerçeve" başlıklı tez çalışması kapsamında Ünivesitemizde öğrenim görmekte olan öğrencilere anket uygulama talebi Rektörlüğümüzce uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerini ve gereğini arz ederim.

Prof. Dr. Murat Mustafa ÖNTUĞ
Rektör a.
Rektör Yardımcısı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Belge Doğrulama Kodu :BSP5DP3CFB Pin Kodu :53262 Belge Takip Adresi : https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/usak-universitesi-ebys

Adres:Bir Eylül Kampusü İzmir Yolu 8.Km 64200/Uşak
Telefon:(276) 221 22 01 Faks:(276) 221 22 02
e-Posta:gensek@usak.edu.tr Web:http://gensek.usak.edu.tr/
Kep Adresi:usakuniversitesi@hs01.kep.tr

Bilgi için: ESRA ARIKAN
Unvanı: Bilgisayar İşletmeni

T.C.
ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Genel Sekreterlik

Sayı : E-75265783-299-109467 30.03.2022
Konu : Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB - Araştırma İzni

DAĞITIM YERLERİNE

İlgi : 25.03.2022 tarihli ve 54850036-044-E.291 sayılı yazı.

Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması doktora programı öğrencisi Arş. Gör. Şahabettin AKŞAB, Doç. Dr. Serap EMİL'in danışmanlığında yürütmekte olduğu "Öğrenci Katılımı: Türkiye'deki Yükseköğretim Kurumlarına Yönelik Bir Çerçeve" konulu bilimsel çalışmasına ilişkin etik kurul kararı, anket formu ilgi yazı ekinde sunulmuş olup, adı geçenin araştırmasını uygulayabilmesi hususunda bilgilerinizi ve gereğini arz/rica ederim.

Bünyamin ÖZTÜRK
Rektör a.
Genel Sekreter

Dağıtım:

Gereği:
Basın Halkla İlişkiler ve Tanıtım Müdürlüğüne

Bilgi:
Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Rektörlüğüne
(Öğrenci İşleri Dairesi Başkanlığı)

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Doğrulama Kodu: 58797F53-B2F5-485F-ABFD-A5572A6DBFA4 Doğrulama Adresi: https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/ybu-ebys
Adres: Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi Esenboğa Külliyesi Dumlupınar Mahallesi Esenboğa/Ankara
Telefon: 0312 906 2000
Faks: 0312 906 2950
Bilgi için:Aysen ERDOĞAN
Yüksekokul Sekreteri

E. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Gönüllü Katılım Formu

Bu çalışma, yükseköğretim kurumlarında öğrencilerin akademik, psikolojik ve sosyal deneyimleri doğrultusunda öğrenci katılımını incelemeyi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma sonuçları, araştırmacı tarafından eğitim bilimleri bölümünde yapılacak bir doktora tezi için kullanılacaktır. Doktora tez danışmanı Doç. Dr. Serap Emil'dir (E-posta: semil@metu.edu.tr).

Çalışmaya katılım tamamıyla gönüllülük temelindedir. Mülakatta, sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bilgiler doktora tezi içinde kullanılacaktır. Araştırmaya başlanmadan önce etik kurul izni alınmış ve araştırmanın yürütüleceği üniversitelere başvurularak gerekli onaylar alınmıştır.

Mülakat, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek soruları içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakabilirsiniz. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için Arş. Gör. Şahabettin Akşab ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz (E-posta: aksab@gantep.edu.tr)

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum. (Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad Tarih İmza

F. CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye. Major: Educational Administration and Planning. Thesis: *A Multiple Case Study on Student Engagement in Turkish Universities Established After 2000s*. October 2024.

Master of Science, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye. Major: Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning and Economics. Thesis: *An Implementation to Develop Undergraduate Students' Social Integration*. January 2018.

Bachelor of Science, Department of Elementary Mathematics Education, Faculty of Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye. June 2014. (Graduated as the first rank student).

ACADEMIC POSITIONS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant. April 2021 - Present. Department of Educational Sciences, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye.

Research Assistant. January 2018 - April 2021. Department of Educational Sciences, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye.

Research Assistant. June 2016 - January 2018. Department of Educational Sciences, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Türkiye.

Mathematics Teacher. September 2014 - June 2016. Ministry of National Education, Düzce, Türkiye.

PUBLICATIONS

Articles

Balkar Betül, Öztuzcu Rabia, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2019). Inferences on Turkish Education Policies in the Light of International Education Policy Studies following the Compulsory Education Reform. Educational Considerations.

Balkar Betül, Öztuzcu Küçükbere Rabia, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2019). Okul Bazlı Bütçeleme (OBB) Uygulamasının Okul Geliştirme İşlevi Açısından Değerlendirilmesi. Kuramsal Eğitimbilim Dergisi.

Özkan Habib, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2018). The Examination of the Social Integration Perceptions of Undergraduate Students. Journal of Education and Training Studies, 6, 25-34., Doi: 10.11114/jets.v6i3a.3155.

Proceedings

Emil Serap, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2018). Türkiye Yükseköğretiminde Araştırma Üniversitesi Kavramını Anlamak: Karşılaştırmalı Analiz. 13. Uluslararası Eğitim Yönetimi Kongresi, 1-11. (Tam Metin Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Book Chapters

Eğitim Yönetiminde Alan Araştırması Kılavuzu EYAAK, Bölüm adı:(Eğitim Yönetiminde Anlatı Araştırması) (2023)., **Akşab Şahabettin**, Sincar Mehmet, Anı Yayıncılık, Editör: Doç. Dr. Murat Polat, Doç. Dr. R. Şamil Tatık, Doç. Dr. Canan Demir Yıldız, Basım sayısı:1, Sayfa Sayısı 302, ISBN:978-605170-920-8, Türkçe (Bilimsel Kitap).

Eğitimin Özü, Bölüm adı:(Özaldatma/Kendini Aldatma) (2022)., Sincar Mehmet, **Akşab Şahabettin**, Pegem Akademi, Editör:Bolat, Özgür; Özdemir Servet, Basım sayısı:1, Sayfa Sayısı 309, ISBN:9786258325799, Türkçe (Bilimsel Kitap).

Presentations at Conferences

Akşab Şahabettin (2023). Türkiye Yükseköğretiminde Kitleselleşme Hareketleri. 6. Uluslararası Yükseköğretim Çalışmaları Konferansı (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Akşab Şahabettin (2022). The Reflections of International Higher Education Trends in Turkey. Twenty-ninth International Conference on Learning (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Kondakçı Yaşar, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2019). Research University Initiative: From Perspective of Educational Administrators in the Universities. 4. Uluslararası Yükseköğretim Çalışmaları Konferansı (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Emil Serap, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2019). Student Engagement in the First Year: The Case of Middle East Technical University. 4. Uluslararası Yükseköğretim Çalışmaları Konferansı (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Emil Serap, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2019). Social Justice in Higher Education Classroom: Exploration of Self-Knowledge of Pre-service Teachers Through Reflective Writing. 14. International Congress of Educational Administration (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Akşab Şahabettin, Özkan Habib (2018). Yükseköğretim Kurumlarında Sosyal Bütünleşme Algılarının Geliştirilmesine Yönelik Program Çalışması. III. Uluslararası Yükseköğretim Çalışmaları Konferansı, 9-10. (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Balkar Betül, Öztuzcu Rabia, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2018). Okul Bazlı Bütçeleme (OBB) Uygulamasının Okul Yöneticisi Görüşleri Doğrultusunda Okul Geliştirme İşlevi Açısından Değerlendirilmesi. 13th International Congress on Educational Administration (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Akşab Şahabettin, Özkan Habib (2018). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Sosyal Bütünleşme Algılarının Geliştirilmesine Yönelik Modül Uygulaması. 13. Uluslararası Eğitim Yönetimi Kongresi, 533-535. (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Emil Serap, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2018). Türkiye Yükseköğretiminde Araştırma Üniversitesi Kavramını Anlamak: Karşılaştırmalı Analiz. 13. Uluslararası Eğitim Yönetimi Kongresi, 1-11. (Tam Metin Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Özğan Habib, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2017). The Examination of the Social Integration Perceptions of Undergraduate Students. 3rd International Conference on Lifelong Learning and Leadership for all (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Summak Mehmet Semih, Han Gül, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2017). İTK-D Modeline Göre Okul Türleri Bağlamında Müdür Yardımcılarının Öznel İyi Oluş Halleri: Bir Örnek Olay Çözümlemesi. 12. Uluslararası Eğitim Yönetimi Kongresi (Özet Bildiri/Sözlü Sunum).

Kalman Mahmut, **Akşab Şahabettin** (2017). Reconsidering Feedback in Instructional Supervision: How should Feedback be Managed in Schools?. 12. Uluslararası Eğitim Yönetimi.

EDITORSHIP

The 6th International Higher Education Studies Conference (IHEC 2023) Proceedings Book, Editor, YÖÇAD-Fenerbahçe University, October, 19-21, 2023.

The 6th International Higher Education Studies Conference (IHEC 2023) Abstracts Book, Editor, YÖÇAD-Fenerbahçe University, October, 19-21, 2023.

The 5th International Higher Education Studies Conference (IHEC 2021) Proceedings Book, Editor, Caretta, October, 2021.

AWARDS

Middle East Technical University (METU)/PhD Course Performance Award, 2020.

Middle East Technical University (METU)/ First Ranked Student, Elementary Mathematics Teacher Education Program, 2014.

G. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Giriş

Son yıllarda yükseköğretim alanında gerçekleşen küresel değişimler, üniversitelerin hem topluma katkı sağlama hem de öğrencileri geleceğe hazırlama rollerini yeniden tanımlamayı zorunlu hale getirmiştir (Brennan vd., 2004). Bu bağlamda üniversitelerin öğrenci katılımı (student engagement) süreçleri hem akademik başarıyı hem de öğrenci memnuniyetini etkileyen önemli bir unsur olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Yükseköğretim literatürü, üniversitelerin yalnızca teknik bilgi sağlama değil, aynı zamanda öğrencilerin teorik bilgiyi uygulamaya dökme, eleştirel düşünme ve hayat boyu öğrenme becerileri kazandırma misyonuna sahip olduklarını belirtmektedir (Clegg, 2008; Davies, 2011; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Öğrenci katılımı, bu süreçlerde temel bir rol oynar ve öğrencilerin akademik hayata aktif katılımını sağlayarak bireysel gelişimlerine ve topluma katkılarına olanak tanır.

Türkiye'de yükseköğretim, özellikle 2000'li yıllardan itibaren hızla büyümüştür. Üniversite sayısının hızla artması ve yükseköğretime erişimin genişlemesi sürecinin bir yansımasıdır (Özoğlu, 2011). Bu büyüme, öğrenci profillerinde ve beklentilerinde köklü değişikliklere yol açmıştır. Ancak niceliksel büyüme, beraberinde kalite tartışmalarını da getirmiştir (Emil & Kondakçı, 2017). Özellikle, son yıllarda üniversite terk oranlarının yükselmesi, Türkiye'deki yükseköğretim sisteminin karşılaştığı ciddi bir sorun olarak öne çıkmaktadır. 2021 ve 2022 yıllarında toplamda 728.700 öğrenci üniversitelerden ayrılmıştır (YÖKAK, 2023). Bu durum, öğrenci katılımı eksikliğinin yükseköğretimde önemli bir sorun olduğunu göstermektedir.

Bu göstergeler ışığında, Türkiye'deki üniversite öğrencilerinin katılım açısından çeşitli zorluklar çektiği anlaşılmaktadır. Özellikle, 2000'li yıllardan sonra hızla artan üniversite sayısına rağmen, öğrenci katılımının ne durumda olduğu konusunda belirsizlikler göze çarpmaktadır. Bu çalışma, öğrenci katılımının köklü üniversitelerde, tarihi birikim ve gelişmiş kurumsal yapı sayesinde daha etkin bir

şekilde yönetilebildiği, ancak 2000'li yıllardan sonra kurulan üniversitelerde bu alanda çeşitli eksiklikler gözlemlendiği gerçeğinden yola çıkmaktadır. Literatürde genellikle nicel yöntemlerle ele alınan öğrenci katılımı olgusu, geniş veriler sunmakla birlikte, bu katılımın arka planındaki akademik, psikolojik ve sosyal faktörlerin derinlemesine incelenmesini sınırlı bırakmaktadır. Bu nedenle, katılımın nitel açıdan değerlendirilmesi, bu süreçle ilişkili daha karmaşık ve içsel faktörlerin anlaşılmasını sağlayacaktır. Özellikle 2000'li yıllar sonrası kurulan üniversitelerde öğrencilerin neler deneyimlediği, neleri beğendikleri ve hangi alanlarda eksiklik hissettiklerine dair derinlemesine bir araştırma yapılması gereklidir. Bu bağlamda, akademik süreçler, psikolojik durum ve sosyal etkileşimler gibi etmenlerin öğrenci deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiği analiz edilerek, 2000'li yıllardan sonra kurulan üniversitelerde öğrenci katılımının geliştirilmesine yönelik stratejiler ortaya konulacaktır.

Bu çalışma, 2000'li yıllardan sonra kurulan üniversitelerde öğrenci katılımı ile ilgili eksikliklerin incelenmesini hedeflemektedir. Özellikle akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik etkenlerin öğrenci katılımı üzerindeki etkileri ele alınarak, bu üniversitelerde öğrenci deneyimleri derinlemesine incelenmektedir. Öğrenci katılımı, yalnızca bireysel çaba değil, aynı zamanda üniversitenin sağladığı destekle de yakından ilişkilidir. Etkili bir üniversite hayatı için öğrencilerin akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik olarak üniversiteye katılmaları önemlidir (Bryson vd., 2009). Öğrenci katılımının yüksek olduğu ortamlarda, öğrenciler yalnızca akademik bilgi değil, aynı zamanda yaratıcı düşünme, problem çözme ve topluma katkı sağlama gibi beceriler de kazanmaktadır.

Yükseköğretimde katılımı artırmak, üniversitelerin hem eğitim politikalarını hem de öğrencilere sunduğu olanakları gözden geçirmesini gerektirir. Literatürde, öğretim elemanları ile öğrenciler arasındaki iş birliği, üniversite yönetimi ile öğrenciler arasındaki iletişim, grup çalışmaları, öğrenci merkezli öğretim teknikleri ve teknoloji entegrasyonu gibi unsurların katılımı artırdığı belirtilmektedir (Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Kuh vd., 2006). Ayrıca, pandemi süreciyle birlikte uzaktan eğitimin yaygınlaşması, öğrenci katılımı açısından yeni zorlukları ve fırsatları beraberinde getirmiştir. Uzaktan eğitimde öğrenci katılımını sağlamak daha zor olmakla birlikte, bazı araştırmalar uzaktan eğitimde daha yüksek düzeyde katılım görüldüğünü ortaya koymaktadır (Chen vd., 2008).

Çalışmanın amacı, 2000'li yıllardan sonra kurulan Türk üniversitelerinde öğrenci katılımını etkileyen akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik faktörleri incelemektir. Özellikle yeni kurulan üniversitelerde öğrenci katılımının nasıl gerçekleştiği ve hangi faktörlerin bu süreci olumsuz etkilediği üzerine yoğunlaşılacaktır. Bu bağlamda, öğrenci katılımı yalnızca bireysel başarıyı değil, aynı zamanda üniversite memnuniyeti, mezuniyet oranları ve öğrenci başarısını da olumlu etkilediği vurgulanmaktadır (Kuh, 2009b).

Sonuç olarak, Türkiye'de öğrenci katılımı üzerine yapılan araştırmaların yetersiz olduğu ve bu alanda daha fazla çalışmanın yapılması gerektiği açıktır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, Türk yükseköğretim sisteminde katılımı artırmaya yönelik politikalara rehberlik edecek ve öğrenci deneyimlerini iyileştirmek için önemli veriler sağlayacaktır. Üniversiteler, öğrenci katılımını teşvik ederek daha kapsayıcı ve destekleyici bir eğitim ortamı yaratabilir, böylece öğrencilerin akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik olarak gelişimlerini destekleyebilir.

Alan yazın Taraması

Öğrenci katılımı yükseköğretim alanında uzun yıllardır araştırma konusu olan, ancak tanımı ve boyutları konusunda farklı yaklaşımlar içeren çok boyutlu bir kavramdır. Yükseköğretim araştırmacıları, katılımı yalnızca derslerdeki etkinliklerle sınırlı olmayan, aynı zamanda öğrencilerin psikolojik, sosyal ve duygusal süreçlerini de kapsayan bir deneyim olarak tanımlamaktadır. Kuh ve meslektaşlarına (2008) göre, öğrenci katılımı iki temel unsuru içermektedir: öğrencilerin eğitici faaliyetlere ne kadar zaman ve çaba harcadıkları ile yükseköğretim kurumlarının kaliteli eğitim süreçlerini uygulamak için ne kadar çaba gösterdiği. Bu tanımda, öğrenci katılımı sadece bireyin çabası değil, aynı zamanda kurumun öğrencileri desteklemek için gösterdiği gayret ile de ilişkilidir.

Öğrenci katılımın sadece sınıf ortamıyla sınırlayan tanımlamalar, zamanla bu bakış açısının eksik olduğunu fark eden araştırmacılar tarafından genişletilmiştir. Carey (2013) bu sınırlı bakışı eleştirerek, katılımın bir aidiyet hissi, bireysellik ve kurumun yapısına aktif katılım gibi daha geniş unsurları kapsaması gerektiğini belirtir. Benzer şekilde, Lawson ve Lawson (2013), katılımı sosyal, psikolojik ve kurumsal bağlamları da içine alan çok boyutlu bir yaklaşım benimsemiştir. Bu yaklaşıma göre, öğrenci katılımının oluşmasında öğrencinin bireysel eylemlerinin yanı sıra, çevresel faktörler

ve toplumsal bağlam da önemli rol oynar. Örneğin, Kahu (2013) katılımın hem kısa vadede hem de uzun vadede birey üzerinde etkileri olduğunu savunur. Bu etkiler öğrencinin genel yaşam doyumu, kişisel gelişimi ve toplumsal katılımı gibi unsurları içerir. Yani, öğrenci katılımı sadece akademik başarıya katkı sağlamakla kalmadığı, aynı zamanda öğrencinin sosyal bir birey olarak toplumdaki yerini güçlendirdiği görülmektedir. Zepke (2018) ise daha geniş kapsamlı bir anlayışı benimseyerek, öğrenci katılımını bireyin eğitimsel faaliyetlerde ne kadar zaman ve çaba harcadığı, akademik personel, kurumlar ve çevresel faktörlerin katılımı nasıl desteklediği üzerine kurulması gerektiğini vurgular.

Fredricks ve meslektaşları (2004), öğrenci katılımını üç temel boyutta incelemiştir: bilişsel, davranışsal ve duygusal katılım. *Bilişsel katılım (cognitive engagement)*, öğrencinin öğrenmeye yönelik zihinsel çabası, eleştirel düşünme ve derinlemesine bilgi edinme süreçlerini içerir. Bu boyut, öğrencilerin akademik başarıyı yakalama konusunda gösterdikleri bilinçli çabayı ifade eder. *Davranışsal katılım (behavioral engagement)*, öğrencinin derslere katılımı, ödev yapma disiplini ve kampüsteki etkinliklere katılım gibi gözlemlenebilir davranışlarla ilgilidir. Bu boyut, öğrencinin eğitimle ilgili somut faaliyetlere ne kadar aktif olarak katıldığını yansıtır. *Duygusal katılım* (*emotional engagement*) öğrencinin üniversiteye karşı olumlu duygusal tepkilerini içerir. Aidiyet hissi, kuruma bağlılık ve eğitime olan motivasyon, duygusal katılımın temel unsurlarıdır.

Öğrenci katılımı, yükseköğretim sürecinde öğrenci başarısını, kişisel gelişimi ve toplumsal katılımı artıran, bilişsel, duygusal ve davranışsal boyutları olan çok boyutlu bir kavramdır. Bu nedenle, öğrenci katılımını sadece akademik başarıya ulaşmayı hedefleyen bir kavram olarak değil, bireyin yaşam boyu öğrenme süreçlerine ve toplumsal hayata entegre olmasını sağlayan bir araç olarak da görülmelidir. Katılımı daha iyi anlamak ve geliştirmek, öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinden daha fazla verim almalarını sağlamak için yükseköğretim kurumlarının önemli bir sorumluluğudur.

Yöntem

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de dört devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören lisans öğrencilerinin üniversite yaşamındaki akademik, psikolojik ve sosyal katılımını incelemektir. Araştırma deseni, öğrenci katılımını derinlemesine anlamak için nitel bir

çoklu durum çalışması (multiple case study) olarak belirlenmiştir (Yin, 2014). Araştırma sorusu, "*2000 sonrası kurulan Türk üniversitelerinde öğrenciler üniversite hayatına nasıl katılım göstermektedir?*" şeklinde formüle edilmiştir. Araştırma, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi, Uşak Üniversitesi, Adıyaman Üniversitesi ve Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi olmak üzere dört üniversiteyi kapsayarak öğrenci deneyimlerini karşılaştırmalı olarak ele almıştır.

Araştırma deseni ve bağlamı: Bu araştırma, çoklu durum çalışması desenini kullanarak, her üniversitenin kendi içerisinde ve birbirleriyle kıyaslanarak öğrenci katılımını anlamayı hedeflemektedir (Stake, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Seçilen üniversiteler, 2006 yılı sonrasında Türkiye'deki yükseköğretim politikası çerçevesinde "her ile bir üniversite" mottosu ile sosyo-ekonomik gelişmişlik düzeyleri farklı olan illerde kurulan dört devlet üniversitesidir. Araştırmada amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmış ve farklı bölgesel, sosyo-kültürel ve akademik yapılar dikkate alınarak örnekler belirlenmiştir (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Veri toplama araçları: Veri toplama sürecinde iki temel veri kaynağı kullanılmıştır: yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ve üniversitelerin öğrenci web sitelerindeki yazılı ve görsel belgeler. Görüşme formu, öğrenci katılımı alan yazını incelenerek araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulmuş, uzman görüşleri doğrultusunda düzenlenmiş ve pilot uygulama sonrasında ana araştırmaya geçilmiştir. Ayrıca, her üniversitenin öğrenci sayfalarındaki dokümanlar ve fotoğraflar da incelenmiştir. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, öğrencilerin akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik deneyimlerine yönelik sorular içerirken, web sayfalarındaki belgeler ve görseller öğrenci politikalarını ve üniversitenin sağladığı imkanları anlamaya yönelik analiz edilmiştir (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

Veri toplama süreci: Veri toplama süreci, etik onayın alınmasının ardından, seçilen dört üniversitenin rektörlüklerinden resmi izinlerin alınması ile başlamıştır. Araştırmacı, her üniversiteyi ziyaret ederek öğrenci görüşmelerini gerçekleştirmiştir. Görüşmeler kampüslerde, gönüllü öğrencilere yüz yüze yapılmış ve ortalama 30-40 dakika sürmüştür. Araştırmacı, görüşmeler sırasında öğrenci katılımı kavramını net bir şekilde açıklamış ve her katılımcıya açık uçlu sorular yöneltmiştir. Toplamda 136 öğrenci ile görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Veri analizi: Veriler, tematik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler, önce kodlanmış, ardından benzer kodlar bir araya getirilerek temalar oluşturulmuştur. Bu süreçte, öğrenci katılımının akademik, sosyal ve psikolojik boyutları detaylı olarak incelenmiş, çapraz vaka analiziyle üniversiteler arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, öğrenci sayfalarındaki yazılı ve görsel belgeler içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir (Rose, 2002).

Araştırmanın güvenilirliği: Araştırmanın güvenilirliğini sağlamak için veri üçgenlemesi (triangulation) kullanılmış, farklı veri kaynakları (görüşmeler, yazılı ve görsel dokümanlar) bir araya getirilmiştir. Ayrıca, her katılımcının görüşmesi kaydedilmiş ve veriler titizlikle transkript edilerek analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular

Çalışmanın iç-vaka analizleri ve çapraz vaka analizleri sonucunda öğrenci katılımı açısından altı kategori ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) üniversitenin ortamı, (2) akademik katılım, (3) psikolojik katılım, (4) sosyal katılım, (5) finansal konular, barınma ve beslenme, ve (6) politik katılım.

Üniversite ortamı (The environment of university). Öğrencilerin üniversite çevresine ilişkin deneyimleri, öğrenci katılımı açısından kritik bir unsur olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. Özellikle küçük şehirlerdeki üniversitelerde, öğrencilerin sosyal imkanlardan yoksun olduğunu belirtmeleri, bu bölgelerde öğrenci sınırlı kalmasına yol açmaktadır. Sosyal çevre, katılımı etkileyen temel unsurlardan biridir ve öğrencilerin kendilerini güvende ve rahat hissettikleri bir sosyal ortamda daha fazla katılım göstermeleri beklenir. Rize ve Adıyaman gibi illerde öğrenciler, yerel halkla olan ilişkilerinin daha çok ekonomik çıkarlar üzerine kurulu olduğunu ve bu durumun üniversite yaşamına uyum sağlamalarını zorlaştırdığını belirtmişlerdir. Bu, öğrencilerin kendilerini dışlanmış hissetmelerine ve üniversite yaşamına duygusal katılımlarının azalmasına neden olabilmektedir. Ancak büyük şehirlerde, öğrenci katılım için daha fazla fırsat sunulması, öğrencilerin akademik ve sosyal faaliyetlere katılımını artırmaktadır.

Akademik katılım (Academic engagement). Akademik katılım, öğrenci başarısının en önemli göstergelerinden biridir ve derslere devam, akademik süreçlere dahil olma ve öğrenme motivasyonu ile ilişkilidir. Araştırma bulguları, öğrencilerin çevrimiçi

eğitimde yaşadıkları sorunları ve teknolojik altyapı eksikliklerini vurgulamaktadır. Bu sorunlar, öğrencilerin akademik süreçlere tam anlamıyla katılım göstermelerini engellemekte; derslerdeki aktif öğrenme süreçlerini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Özellikle teorik ağırlıklı eğitim modellerinin, öğrencilerin akademik katılımı düşürdüğü ifade edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, uygulamalı derslerde yaşanan materyal eksiklikleri de akademik katılımı sınırlayan bir diğer faktördür. Özellikle sağlık bilimleri gibi uygulama gerektiren alanlarda, yeterli altyapının sağlanamaması, öğrencilerin akademik katılımı doğrudan olumsuz etkilemektedir. Akademik katılımın bir diğer önemli boyutu olan yabancı dil yeterliliği de İngilizce eğitim veren üniversitelerde öğrencilerin derslere katılımını etkileyen bir faktör olarak öne çıkmıştır.

Psikolojik katılım (Psychological engagement). Psikolojik katılım, öğrencilerin üniversite deneyimleri ile duygusal ve zihinsel bağ kurmalarıyla ilgilidir. Bu boyut, öğrencilerin üniversite hayatlarına ne ölçüde kendilerini dahil hissettikleri, motivasyonları, akademik baskılarla başa çıkma kapasiteleri ve psikolojik sağlıkları ile ilişkilidir. Öğrencilerin üniversiteye başlarken ailelerinin baskın etkisi altında olduklarını ve bu sürecin psikolojik bir uyum gerektirdiğini belirtmişlerdir. Aileden uzakta yaşamaya alışma süreci, bazı öğrencilerde psikolojik zorluklara yol açmış ve bu süreçte üniversitenin sunduğu psikolojik destek hizmetleri yetersiz kalmıştır. Ayrıca, akademik baskılar ve gelecek kaygıları öğrencilerin psikolojik katılımı olumsuz etkilemiştir. Bu durumda, üniversitenin sunduğu destekleyici hizmetlerin ve danışmanlık hizmetlerinin yetersiz olduğu görülmektedir. Psikolojik katılım, öğrencilerin hem akademik hem de sosyal katılım düzeylerini etkileyen önemli bir unsurdur; çünkü stres ve kaygı seviyeleri yüksek olan öğrenciler, üniversite yaşamına tam anlamıyla katılım gösterememektedir.

Sosyal katılım (Social engagement). Sosyal katılım, öğrenci toplulukları ve sosyal etkinliklere katılımı ifade eder. Bu tür katılımlar, öğrencilerin üniversite hayatını daha zengin ve anlamlı hale getiren sosyal bağlantılar kurmalarını sağlar. Ancak araştırmada ortaya çıkan bulgulara göre, küçük şehirlerdeki üniversitelerde sosyal etkinliklerin sınırlı olması ve mevcut kulüplerin yeterince aktif olmaması, öğrencilerin sosyal katılımını olumsuz etkilemiştir. Öğrenciler, sosyal katılımın az olmasının kendilerini üniversite ortamına yabancılaştırdığını ve bu durumun genel memnuniyetlerini azalttığını belirtmiştir. Öğrenci topluluklarının çeşitliliğinin az

olması ve üniversite yönetimlerinin sosyal faaliyetlere yeterince önem vermemesi, öğrenci katılımını zayıflatan faktörler arasında yer alır. Sosyal katılımın az olması, öğrencilerin üniversiteye duygusal bağ kurmasını zorlaştırmakta ve genel olarak öğrenci katılımını azaltmaktadır.

Finansal konular, barınma ve beslenme. Finansal sorunlar, öğrenci katılımı doğrudan etkileyen en önemli unsurlardan biridir. Araştırmaya katılan öğrenciler, KYK kredilerinin yetersizliğinden ve artan yaşam maliyetlerinden dolayı maddi zorluklar yaşadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Birçok öğrenci, ailelerine yük olmamak için yarı zamanlı çalışmak zorunda kaldığını ve bunun akademik başarılarını olumsuz etkilediğini ifade etmiştir. Finansal sorunlar, öğrencilerin sadece akademik değil, sosyal katılımını da sınırlandırmaktadır. Özellikle sosyal etkinliklere ve kampüs dışındaki aktivitelere katılım, mali nedenlerden dolayı sınırlı kalmaktadır. Bu durum, öğrenci etkileyen sınırlayan önemli bir engeldir. Maddi zorluklar yaşayan öğrenciler, üniversitenin sunduğu maddi destek programlarının yetersiz olduğunu vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca, ekonomik zorluklar öğrenci katılımını zayıflattığı gibi, öğrencilerin üniversite deneyiminden alacakları faydayı da azaltmaktadır. Üniversitelerin sunduğu konaklama ve beslenme imkanları da öğrenci katılımını etkileyen diğer önemli unsurlardır. Öğrenciler, devlet yurtlarının yetersiz olduğunu ve mevcut yurtların da kalabalık ve konforsuz olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Özellikle yemeklerin kalitesi ve beslenme imkanlarının sınırlı olması, öğrencilerin üniversite yaşamıyla katılımı engelleyen faktörler arasında yer almıştır. Konaklama ve beslenme gibi temel ihtiyaçların karşılanamaması, öğrencilerin psikolojik ve akademik katılımlarını da olumsuz etkilemektedir. Yetersiz beslenme ve kötü konaklama koşulları, öğrencilerin hem fiziksel hem de zihinsel sağlığını olumsuz etkilemekte ve bu durum öğrenci katılımını zayıflatmaktadır.

Politik katılım (Political engagement). Politik katılım, öğrenci katılımının önemli bir boyutunu oluşturur. Araştırmada, öğrencilerin üniversite yönetimlerinin karar alma süreçlerine dahil olmamaktan şikayetçi oldukları görülmektedir. Küçük şehirlerdeki üniversitelerde öğrenciler, politik görüşlerini açıklamaktan çekindiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu durum, özellikle muhafazakâr veya ideolojik açıdan baskıcı çevrelerde öğrencilerin politik katılımı sınırlamaktadır. Bununla birlikte, büyük şehirlerdeki üniversitelerde politik katılımın daha yüksek olduğu ve öğrencilerin

üniversite yönetimleriyle daha fazla katılım gösterdikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Politik katılım, öğrencilerin üniversite hayatında söz sahibi olmalarını sağlayan önemli bir boyut olup, bu süreçte yaşanan sınırlamalar öğrenci katılımını olumsuz etkilemektedir.

Araştırmanın bulguları, öğrenci katılımının çok boyutlu bir yapı olduğunu ve akademik, psikolojik, sosyal ve politik süreçlerin öğrenci katılımı üzerindeki yansımasını göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, katılım çok boyutlu bir olgu olup, öğrencilerin akademik, psikolojik ve sosyal deneyimlerini derinden etkilemektedir. Üniversitelerin, öğrenci katılımını artırmak için hem akademik hem de sosyal olanakları güçlendirmesi, öğrencilere finansal destek sağlaması ve katılımcı yönetim süreçlerini geliştirmesi gerekmektedir. Bu sayede, öğrencilerin üniversite hayatına daha fazla katılım göstermeleri ve eğitim süreçlerinden daha fazla verim almaları sağlanabilir.

Tartışma

Üniversitenin ortamı, öğrencilerin katılımını şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Çalışma, öğrencilerin akademik ve sosyal beklentilerinin, aile baskısının, şehir özelliklerinin ve üniversitenin yapısının, öğrenci katılımı üzerinde doğrudan etkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Özellikle metropoller, sundukları geniş sosyal ve akademik imkanlarla öğrenci katılımı artırmaktadır. Küçük şehirlerdeki üniversiteler ise bu olanaklardan yoksundur, bu da öğrenci katılımı olumsuz etkileyebilir (Astin, 1993; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Tinto, 1993).

Öğretim üyeleri ile ilişkiler, akademik katılımın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Öğrenciler, alanında uzman akademisyenlerden ders aldıklarında daha fazla akademik katılım göstermektedirler. Ancak, Türkiye'de 2000'li yıllardan sonra kurulan üniversitelerdeki öğretim üyesi eksikliği, öğrencilerin bu katılımdan yeterince beslenememelerine yol açmaktadır. Özellikle öğretim üyeleri ile sınıf dışında daha samimi ve destekleyici ilişkiler kurulabilirken, sınıf içinde daha resmi ve mesafeli bir atmosfer hakimdir (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Ayrıca, aşırı akademik yük de katılımı olumsuz etkileyen faktörlerden biridir.

Öğrencilerin üniversite hayatındaki psikolojik katılım, motivasyon, aidiyet hissi ve duygusal refah gibi unsurların bir kombinasyonu ile şekillenir. Çalışmada, özellikle

ilk yıl öğrencilerinin ailelerinden uzaklaşmanın getirdiği zorluklar ve uyum süreçleri nedeniyle psikolojik olarak zorlandıkları belirtilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, üniversitelerin psikolojik destek hizmetlerine daha fazla yatırım yapmaları gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır (Kahu, 2013; Trowler, 2010). Ayrıca, kadın öğrencilerin toplumsal ve kültürel engeller nedeniyle erkeklere kıyasla daha fazla psikolojik zorluk yaşadıkları görülmektedir.

Kampüs yaşamı ve sosyal etkinlikler, öğrenci katılımını artıran önemli unsurlardır. Ancak, özellikle yeni kurulan üniversitelerde kampüslerin ayrık yapıları ve yetersiz sosyal imkanlar, öğrencilerin sosyal katılımını kısıtlamaktadır. Ayrıca, öğrenci kulüplerinin etkin olmaması ve sosyal faaliyetlerin sınırlı olması, öğrencilerin kampüste geçirdiği zamanı ve sosyal katılımlarını olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

Ekonomik zorluklar, öğrencilerin hem akademik hem de sosyal katılımı olumsuz etkileyen başlıca faktörlerdendir. Öğrenciler, maddi sıkıntılar nedeniyle ders materyalleri ve sosyal etkinliklere katılımı gibi temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamaz hale gelmektedir. Ayrıca, kampüs dışındaki barınma imkanlarının sınırlı olması ve KYK yurtlarındaki yetersizlikler de öğrencilerin kampüste daha az vakit geçirmelerine neden olmaktadır. Yurtlarda sunulan yemek hizmetlerindeki kalitesizlik ve fiyat sorunları da öğrencilerin beslenme düzenini ve genel sağlık durumunu etkilemektedir (Korucuk, 2023; Kuh vd., 2006).

Üniversitelerde, öğrencilerle yönetim arasındaki etkileşimin yetersiz olduğu ve öğrencilerin taleplerinin dikkate alınmadığı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ayrıca, üniversitelerdeki ideolojik yaklaşımlar ve bu yaklaşımların öğrenci katılımını olumsuz etkilediği belirtilmiştir. Üniversitelerin çeşitlilik odaklı bir yaklaşım benimsememesi, öğrenci katılımını engelleyen önemli bir unsur olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır (Neary, 2016; Tekerek, 2023). Bu bulgular, Türk yükseköğretiminde öğrenci katılımını artırmak için üniversitelerin sosyal, psikolojik ve akademik desteklerini artırmaları gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

H. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Social Sciences ☒

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Applied Mathematics ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Informatics ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences ☐

YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Akşab
Adı / Name : Şahabettin
Bölümü / Department : Eğitim Bilimleri, Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES ESTABLISHED AFTER 2000S

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE**:** **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☐ **Doktora** / PhD ☒

1. **Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır. /** Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide. ☒
2. **Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of **two years. *** ☐
3. **Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for period of **six months**. ***** ☐

***** *Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu kararının basılı kopyası tezle birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir. / A copy of the decision of the Institute Administrative Committee will be delivered to the library together with the printed thesis.*

Yazarın imzası / Signature ..... **Tarih** / Date .....
(Kütüphaneye teslim ettiğiniz tarih. Elle doldurulacaktır.)
(Library submission date. Please fill out by hand.)

Tezin son sayfasıdır. / This is the last page of the thesis/dissertation.