

## RESEARCH

## Open Access

## ARAŞTIRMA

## Açık Erişim

## The Reasons University Students Apply to the Center of Psychological Counseling and Guidance: A Retrospective Study

*Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Merkezine Başvuru Nedenleri: Retrospektif Bir Çalışma*

Şerife Koç , Esra Öksüz , Fatma Ayhan 

**Authors Information****Şerife Koç**

Assistant Professor, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Turkey [serifekoc@kmu.edu.tr](mailto:serifekoc@kmu.edu.tr)

**Esra Öksüz**

Psychologist, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Turkey [esraoksuz@kmu.edu.tr](mailto:esraoksuz@kmu.edu.tr)

**Fatma Ayhan**

Assistant Professor, Batman University, Batman, Turkey [f.kucuksumbul@gmail.com](mailto:f.kucuksumbul@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to examine the application reasons of university students to psychological counseling and guidance center. The population of this retrospective and descriptive designed research was comprised of all applications of students of a university to a psychological counseling and guidance center between 2012-2019, and the sample was comprised of 373 applications with complete information. The data were collected through the application form and analyzed with descriptive tests, chi-square test, with the significance level at  $p < 0.05$ . The highest number of applicants were from the first and second grades. Admissions were most frequently with personality problems, least with adaptation complaints. There was no significant difference between demographic characteristics, and the psychological problems. University students frequently experience personality-related complaints, which should be treated with ultimate care in providing psycho-social support for students. Counseling centers and the health professionals play an important role in improving mental health levels of the students.

**ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın amacı; psikolojik danışmanlık ve rehberlik merkezine başvuran üniversite öğrencilerinin başvuru nedenlerinin incelenmesidir. Retrospektif tanımlayıcı türdeki araştırmanın evrenini 2012-2019 yılları arasında bir devlet üniversitesinin psikolojik danışmanlık ve rehberlik merkezine yapılan tüm öğrenci başvuruları, örneklemini bilgileri eksiksiz 373 başvuru oluşturmuştur. Veriler görüşmelerde kaydedilen başvuru formu ile toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı testler ve ki-kare testi kullanılmış, istatistiksel anlamlılık düzeyi  $p < 0.05$  kabul edilmiştir. Üniversite öğrencilerinin merkeze başvurusu birinci ve ikinci sınıfta daha yoğunudur. Öğrenciler, en sık kişilik sorunları, en az uyum ile ilgili sorunlar nedeniyle merkeze başvurmuştur. Demografik özellikler ile psikososyal problemler arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmamıştır. Üniversite öğrencileri sıklıkla kişilikle ilgili sorunlar deneyimlemektedir. Üniversite öğrencilerine psikososyal destek sağlanmasıyla ilgili planlamalarda kişilikle ilgili problemler konusu atlanmamalıdır. Öğrencilerin psikososyal sağlığını koruma ve geliştirmede üniversitelerin Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Merkezlerine ve sağlık profesyonellerine önemli görevler düşmektedir.

**Article Information****Keywords**

University Students  
Psychological Counseling  
Application Reasons  
Psychological Counseling and  
Guidance Center

**Anahtar Kelimeler**

Üniversite Öğrencileri  
Psikolojik Danışma  
Başvuru Nedenleri  
Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik  
Merkezi

**Article History**

**Received:** 07/08/2021

**Revision:** 03/01/2022

**Accepted:** 14/01/2022

**Cite this article as:** Koç, Ş., Öksüz, E., & Ayhan, F. (2022). The reasons university students apply to the center of psychological counseling and guidance: A retrospective study. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 12(64), 155-169. <https://doi.org/10.17066/tpdrd.1096030>

**Ethical Statement:** The research was reviewed and approved by the Non-interventional Clinical Trials Ethics Committee of Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University (08-2018/26).

## INTRODUCTION

As a result of continuous change of the societies and their values, psychological problems and the need to receive psychological support are increasing. Considering the lifetime prevalence rates of psychological disorders, the highest rates are observed in the university period (Blanco et al., 2008; Holm-Hadulla & Koutsoukou-Argraki, 2015; Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Zivin et al., 2009). The age at university education covers critical processes for the young people such as gaining freedom and independence, where socio-cultural changes occur that directly/indirectly influence the mental health such as getting away from the family and establishing new friendship relations (Cömert & Gizir, 2020; Demirhan et al., 2012; Pektaş & Bilge, 2007; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). Due to the nature of this period, which includes the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, mental ups and downs can be observed in young people arising from physical, emotional and psychosocial changes (Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012). According to Erikson, the task of individuals during these periods of development is to positively solve the crises of “role confusion versus identity confusion” and “isolation versus closeness” (Erikson, 1994). Young people need to cope with these psychosocial problems arising from crises and ups and downs experienced during this period. The extent and impact of psychological problems that cannot be effectively dealt with will be greater. (Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012). Some of the psychological problems of the youth, who are in an identity quest struggling to find and understand oneself in the society, are identity crisis, adaptation problems, mood problems, human relations and communication, family, school problems, sensuality, academic problems, social and friendship problems. Young people who experience these problems are at risk for mental health problems of our time such as stress, anxiety and depression and other psychological diseases. The lack of adequate preventive mental health services in universities poses a significant risk for the increase of mental illnesses in the society (Geçkil & Yıldız, 2006; Holm-Hadulla & Koutsoukou-Argraki, 2015; İkiz & Mete Otlu, 2015; İnanç et al., 2004; Karataş & Gizir, 2013; Özgüven, 1992; Pektaş & Bilge, 2007; Rith-Najarian et al., 2019; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). Therefore, individuals at the university age are among the primary risk groups in terms of community mental health (Gulliver et al., 2010; Kızıldağ et al., 2012; Şimşek et al., 2007).

Early diagnosis of the psychosocial problems of the university students in the early adulthood, which is a critical period for the onset of mental illnesses, and planning appropriate interventions are among the priority issues for preventive mental health services (Cömert & Gizir, 2020; Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012; Gizir, 2010; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). In addition to the responsibilities of raising qualified manpower and gaining professional knowledge skills, universities have undertaken the responsibility of providing psychosocial support for developing the personality in students, helping them cope with the problems and solving their mental problems (Pektaş & Bilge, 2007). The article 47 of the Higher Education Act No. 2547 in Turkey obliges universities to solve personal and family problems of students within the scope of protection of physical and mental health (The Law on Higher Education 1981, 2020). In line with the findings of this article, it is evaluated to be compulsory to establish psychological counseling and guidance centers in universities under the “Department of Medico Social, Health, Culture and Sports Affairs”. In accordance with this implementation, a significant responsibility falls on the university psychological counseling and guidance centers to protect and improve the mental health levels of university students and employees (Cömert & Gizir, 2020; Erkan, Cihangir Çankaya et al., 2012; Higher Education Institutions, Medico-Social, Health, Culture and Sports Affairs Department Implementation Regulation, 1984).

In order for the improvement of the university counseling and guidance centers to plan psychosocial support programs, certain information is required about the psychosocial problems most frequently experienced among the students in the university. Determining the main issues, with which the students most frequently apply to the psychological counselling and guidance centers, will not only make contribution to the students for a better adaptation to the university and later life and prevent mental health problems, but also will increase the quality of the psychological counselling and guidance services and increase the application rates (Erkan, Cihangir Çankaya et al., 2012; Gizir, 2010; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). It was reported that young people traditionally seek support from the family and friends to cope with their psychological problems, with an insufficient level of intention to seek help from a specialist and with low rates of application to the psychological counseling and guidance centres (Gulliver et al., 2010; İkiz & Mete Otlu, 2015; Kacur & Atak, 2011; Kızıldağ et al., 2012; Topkaya & Meydan, 2013). There are some factors that prevent university students from applying to psychosocial services. These factors are absence of an awareness about psychosocial services (in other words, being unaware about what services are available or and how to access), stigma, individual characteristics, concerns about privacy and trust, inability to evaluate the symptoms, and accessibility (i.e., having no sufficient time, long distance, cost) problems (Eisenberg et al., 2007; Gulliver et al., 2010; Storrie et al., 2010; Yorgason et al., 2008). Determining the characteristics of individuals applying to university counseling and guidance services and the motives behind will provide significant information in increasing the satisfaction of the demands and expectations of the ones who benefit from these services. Additionally, it will also provide important information to increase the rate of application for those abstaining from these services and seeking traditional solutions. In this context, there is an urgent need for studies aimed at identifying the mental problems faced by young people in the university (Demirhan et al., 2012; Erkan, Cihangir Çankaya et al., 2012; Rith-Najarian et al., 2019; Türküm et al., 2004). There are studies in the literature that examine the psychological support needs of university students (Atik & Yalçın, 2010; Getachew, 2019; Janetius, 2016; Karataş & Gizir, 2013). In these studies, it was determined that university students needed support for academic, crisis, discrimination, disability (Karataş & Gizir, 2013), relational, emotional, and career issues (Atik & Yalçın 2010). According to these studies, university students required help for academic, crisis, discrimination, disability (Karataş & Gizir, 2013), relational, emotional, and career difficulties (Atik & Yalçın 2010). Another study found that students applied respectively mostly for academic reasons, mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, and interpersonal relationship issues (Getachew, 2019). In a qualitative study conducted with college students in India, it was found that students applied due to academic, unwanted habits, familial problems, relationship problems, and personal problems respectively (Janetius, 2016). In a university in South America, it was found that students most frequently applied to a counseling center due to academic problems, anxiety, affective problems, and adverse life events (Villacura et al., 2015). This study is the first retrospective study that examines the problems of the students applying to the psychological counseling and guidance center.

The aim of this study is to examine the application reasons of university students to a psychological counseling and guidance center.

Research questions are:

- For which reasons did the university students apply to the psychological counseling and guidance center of the university?

- What is the relationship between students' gender and age and intervention applied, number of psychological counseling, and application reason?
- What is the relationship between students' educational levels and grades and intervention applied, number of psychological counseling, and application reason?

## **METHOD**

The study was conducted in the retrospective descriptive research design.

### **Study Group**

The population of the study is comprised of all the student applications made to the Psychological Counselling and Guidance Center of a public university between November 2012-October 2019. No sampling was implemented in the study, instead, 373 applications, whose interview records were kept complete, were included in the study. Among these applications, 42 were not included in the study due to missing information. In the study, 89.8% of the population could be reached.

### **Ethical Statement**

Prior to the research, the approval of the Ethics Committee was obtained (Decision no: 08-2018/26), and in order to examine the interview records, the institutional permission was obtained from the university where the study was conducted. In the examination of the interview records, the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were taken into consideration, the student data were examined through numbers, the interview records and the information about the students were not shared with third parties.

### **Data Collection and Instruments**

In the collection of the data, the Application Form was used that includes certain pieces of information such as age, gender, faculty, grade, application date, and interview records.

The data about the application reasons of the students were determined by descriptive analysis of the interview records. The psychosocial problems of the students admitted to the center were collected in 5 themes as emotional, academic, personality, concentration and adaptation problems. Problematic areas include emotional issues (certain emotions such as anger, happiness, sadness, sorrow, and grief), and academic issues (anxiety and insecurity of university students about both their education life and professional life after graduation), personality issues (the mood elements formed in childhood, and problems arising from certain motives such as the negative attitudes displayed by the parents while raising the child, cultural factors, subconscious factors, and issues that negatively influence almost all the life of an individual, deteriorating one's general temperament), concentration issues (inability to maintain concentration on work or situation, and accompanying insomnia or difficulty in maintaining sleeping) and adaptation issues (inability to adapt to faculty and university life with the emotional depression caused by being away from the family).

### **Data Analysis**

In the data analysis of the study, the demographic data (age, gender, faculty, grade, application date, number of applications) in the interview records and the data collected for the analysis of the psychosocial issues were all coded and they were evaluated through the SPSS 21.0 program through descriptive

statistics such as number and percentage. Chi-square test was applied for the intergroup significance. In the analysis of the data, the significance level was accepted as  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS

This section covers certain data about the relationships between some socio-demographic characteristics of the students applying to the counseling and guidance center and certain variables such as the information about some of their application reasons, the type and number of interventions applied.

Of the students admitted to the center, 255 (68.4%) were female and 118 (31.6%) were male. The average age of the students was  $21.37 \pm 4$ . The group with the highest number of applications to the center was the 17-20 ( $n=180$ ; 48.3%) group. The application numbers of the first grade ( $n=123$ ; 33%) and second grade ( $n=121$ ; 32.4%) students were higher. The majority of students applying to the center continue their education at undergraduate level ( $n=253$ ; 67.8%) (Table 1).

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the students who applied to the psychological counselling and guidance center**

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	255	68,4
Male	118	31,6
<b>Age</b>		
17-20 years old	180	48,3
21-24 years old	163	43,7
25 and over	30	8
<b>Grade</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	123	33
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	121	32,4
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	62	16,6
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	67	18
<b>Education Level</b>		
Associate Degree	111	29,8
Undergraduate Degree	253	67,8
Postgraduate Degree	9	2,4

Of the students, 32.2 percent ( $n=120$ ) were from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 24.9% ( $n=93$ ) were from the Faculty of Literature, 15.3% ( $n=57$ ) were from the Vocational Schools, 7.8 % ( $n=29$ ) were from the Faculty of Engineering, 7% ( $n=26$ ) from the Faculty of Health Sciences, 4% ( $n=15$ ) from the School of Physical Education and Sports, 2.9 % ( $n=11$ ) were from the Faculty of Education, 2.1 percent ( $n=8$ ) were from the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, 1.6 % ( $n=6$ ) from the Institute of Social Sciences, 1.1 percent ( $n=4$ ) from the Faculty of Science, and 1.1 percent ( $n=4$ ) were from the Institute of Science and Technology.

It was determined that 2.95% ( $n=11$ ) of the students were also followed by a psychiatric physician when they applied to the center. Of the students admitted to the center, 88.2% ( $n=329$ ) received psychological support from the psychologist in the center, while 11.8% ( $n= 44$ ) received psychological support and referred to a psychiatric physician. 50.9% of students ( $n=190$ ) were given psychological support for once, 18.5% ( $n=69$ ) for two times, and 30.6% ( $n=114$ ) for three times and more. Examining the application reasons of the students, it was determined that the students applied most frequently due to emotional issues (50.7%) and personality issues (39.1%), while the least number of application was due to adaptation problems (2.7%) (Table 2).



**Table 2. Application reasons of students to the psychological counselling and guidance center**

Application reason	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Emotional Problems	189	50,7
Academic Problems	15	4,0
Personality Problems	146	39,1
Concentration Problems	13	3,5
Adaptation Problems	10	2,7

Some socio-demographic characteristics of the students and some figures as well as percentages are given (Table 3, Table 4) concerning the reasons for applying to the psychological counseling and guidance center, type and number of interventions applied. There was no significant difference among the gender, age, and grade of the students, their application reasons, and the type and number of the interventions applied.

**Table 3. Application reasons of students to the psychological counselling and guidance center and interventions applied (based on their gender and age groups)**

Application Reasons and Interventions	Gender		Age groups		
	Female n (%)	Male n (%)	17-20 n (%)	21-24 n (%)	25 and over n (%)
<b>Intervention applied</b>					
PC	224(87,8)	105 (89)	156(47,4)	146(44,4)	27(8,2)
PC and RPC	31(12,2)	13(13,9)	24(54,5)	17(38,6)	3(6,8)
Test Value	x <sup>2</sup> = ,021p=,885		x <sup>2</sup> = ,795p=,672		
<b>Number of psychological counselling</b>					
1 time	128 (50,2)	62 (60,1)	88 (46,3)	32(46,4)	60(52,6)
2 times	43(16,9)	26 (22)	80(42,1)	33 (47,8)	50(43,9)
3 times and more	84 (32,9)	30(25,4)	22(11,6)	4(5,8)	4(3,5)
Test Value	x <sup>2</sup> = 2,745p=,253		x <sup>2</sup> = 7,331p=,119		
<b>Application Reason</b>					
Emotional Problems	129(68,3)	60(31,7)	98(54,4)	79(48,5)	12(6,3)
Academic Problems	9(60)	6(40)	7(3,9)	5(3,1)	3(10)
Personality Problems	102(69,9)	44 (30,1)	61(33,9)	71(43,6)	14(46,7)
Concentration Problems	7(53,8)	6(46,2)	10(5,6)	3(1,8)	-
Adaptation Problems	8(80)	2(20)	4(2,2)	5(3,1)	1(2,7)
Test Value	x <sup>2</sup> = 2,221p=,205		x <sup>2</sup> = 7,326p=,163		

PC: Psychological Counselling, RPC: Referral to a Psychiatric Clinic

There was no significant relationship between the educational level of the students and the number of psychological support sessions in the counseling and guidance center (Table 4).

**Table 4. Application reasons of students to the psychological counselling and guidance center and interventions applied (based on their educational levels and grades)**

	Educational level			Grade			
	Associate Dg. n (%)	Undergraduate Dg. n (%)	Postgraduate n (%)	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)
<b>Intervention applied</b>							
PC	101(91)	219(86,6)	9(100)	106(86,2)	107(88,4)	57(91,9)	59(88,1)
PC and RPC	10(9)	34(13,4)	-	17(13,8)	14(11,6)	5(8,1)	8(11,9)
Test Value	$x^2= 1,810p=,405$			$x^2= 1,322p=,724$			
<b>Number of psychological counselling</b>							
1 time	43(38,7)	141(55,7)	6(66,7)	73(59,3)	49(40,5)	35(56,5)	33(49,3)
2 times	27(24,3)	42(16,6)	-	19(15,4)	19(15,7)	14(22,6)	17(25,4)
3 times and over	41(36,9)	70(27,7)	3(33,3)	31(25,2)	53(43,8)	13(21)	17(14,9)
Test Value	$x^2= 2,445p=,655$			$x^2= ,024p=,876$			
<b>Application reason</b>							
Emotional Problems	58(52,3)	129(27,3)	2(22,2)	69(56,1)	60(49,6)	30(48,4)	30(44,8)
Academic Problems	8(7,2)	7(2,8)	-	5(4,1)	6(5)	1(1,6)	3(4,5)
Personality Problems	32(28,8)	108(42,7)	6(66,7)	43(35)	47(38,8)	28(45,2)	28(41,8)
Concentration Problems	9(8,1)	4(1,6)	-	4(3,3)	6(5)	0	3(4,5)
Adaptation Problems	4(3,6)	5(6,8)	1(11,1)	2(1,6)	2(1,7)	3(4,8)	3(4,5)
Test Value	$x^2= 2,321p=,564$			$x^2= 1,602p=,386$			

## DISCUSSION

Throughout university life, students face a variety of difficulties and psychosocial problems. Most of these problems negatively affect the psychological status of the students. It is a known fact that both the frequency of psychological problems of university students and the need for psychological counseling are increasing (Atik & Yalçın, 2010; Karataş & Gizir, 2013). In order to cope with their psychological problems appropriately and effectively, it is expected from the students to display the behavior of seeking help from a specialist (Gulliver et al., 2010). However, the results of previous studies demonstrate that most students with psychological problems do not apply for treatment, and most of those who are treated also give up treatment (Blanco et al., 2008; Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Zivin et al., 2009).

University students face a wide range of problems such as developmental problems like personality issues, emotional problems, academic problems, adaptation problems, stress, depression and suicide (Atik & Yalçın, 2010; Erdur Baker & Bıçak, 2006; Getachew, 2019; Karataş & Gizir, 2013; Macaskill, 2013; Özgüven, 1992; Storrie et al., 2010; Villacura et al., 2015). In this study, it was determined that the highest number of applications to the center were emerging from emotional and personality problems while the lowest number of applications were due to adaptation problems. Similarly, Erkan, Özbay et al., (2012) determined that students most frequently experience emotional problems. As the university process is a period covering the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, it is common to experience emotional problems and personality problems. The fact that most frequently observed issues are the emotional

problems can be explained by that students involve in a new environment different from their family life and their own culture and difficulties arise in adapting to this environment.

In this study, the second most frequent application reason of students is personality problems. This result can be interpreted by the fact that these ages correspond to a period of transition from adolescence to early adulthood that is abound with identity confusions in individuals. Family characteristics and having childhood problems like love, trust and attachment in the family affect the entire personality of the individual and can cause future personality problems. In the solution of personality problems, it is recommended to carry out studies on family characteristics, family problems and parental attitudes. Since identity characteristics of an individual will be efficient in solving the problems to be faced during the university years and in the further stages of life, personality development programs should be executed in the university period in order for the students to gain certain skills such as self-recognition, self-confidence, being self-ordained, displaying resolute/consistent behaviors, catching oneself on doing mistakes, and develop problem solving skills (Dündar, 2009; Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012). Intervention programs such as self-recognition and character empowerment are important for students to cope with personality problems (Eryılmaz, 2017). Other problems faced by students include academic problems, concentration problems, and adaptation problems, respectively. Similar to this conclusion, it was determined by Atik and Yalçın (2010) that students admitted to the psychosocial services less frequently due to academic problems, concentration problems and adaptation problems.

It was reported by previous studies that, in coping with the problems university students face during their education, the students use rather ineffective coping methods and display avoidance behavior (Sevinç & Gizir, 2014), and prefer to receive social support from family and friends (Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012; Kızıldağ et al., 2012), while their willingness to seek help from a specialist is at moderate levels. The incidence of psychosocial problems is increasing in students (Atik & Yalçın, 2010; Karataş & Gizir, 2013) and the fact that the student willingness level to seek help from a specialist is moderate (Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012) indicates that these centers should focus on comprehensive, preventive and mental-health-enhancing studies to increase student participation.

In this study, there was no significant difference between the gender of the students and the psychosocial problems they experienced. Unlike this finding, some studies in the literature found that there were differences between gender and psychosocial problems (Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012). Although there was no significant difference in terms of the gender, it was determined in the present study that the number of female students admitted to the center was higher than that of males. Similar to this result, it was determined by numerous previous studies that the application numbers of the female students to the psychosocial services were more than those of male students (Eisenberg et al., 2011; Rickwood et al., 2005; Rith-Najarian et al., 2019). These results support the findings that female students are more likely to be willing to seek help from a specialist and girls display more support-receiving behavior than males (Erkan, Özbay et al., 2012; Kızıldağ et al., 2012).

In this study, it was also found that applications to the psychosocial guidance and counseling center were most frequently made in the first and second grades, respectively. According to Macaskill (2013), psychological symptoms of British university students in the second year are much greater than in the previous years, and further evaluation of the mental health of the students in the second year is essential. In the previous studies, it was determined that the students experienced psychosocial problems most frequently in the first grade (Ceyhan & Ceyhan, 2011; İkiz & Mete Otlı, 2015). Since the first year is a



new start to the university life, it brings along many issues such as leaving the family, adaptation to a new environment and friends. In parallel to this result, it was reported in the literature that first grade students experience a higher level of depression than the forth grade students (Ceyhan & Ceyhan, 2011; Sevinç & Gizir, 2014). It is a known fact that students can experience problems like “boredom, restraint, unhappiness, anhedonia, anger control, quick temper, concentration, repetitive thought and behavior rituals, etc.”. In order to cope with their psychological problems, they seek support from friends and family, often without professional support (Kızıldağ et al., 2012). It is reported in the literature that help seeking behavior of young people is not at the desired level, and that very few students apply to the university psychological counseling and guidance center for professional support (Gulliver et al., 2010; Rith-Najarian et al., 2019). In this respect, it is important that professionals working in the field should conduct studies on the barriers for young people's psychological help seeking behavior and factors that facilitate their professional help seeking behavior, and to develop practices that will increase mental health literacy in the community (Gulliver et al., 2010; Rith-Najarian et al., 2019; Storrie et al. 2010). Furthermore, it would be beneficial to implement treatments in the guidance and psychological counseling center for the most prevalent psycho-social difficulties experienced by students, as well as to assure student engagement. Similar to the result of this study, as it is mentioned that emotional disorders are more prevalent in students, it will be beneficial to organize emotion regulation programs for students. As it will allow students who gain the skills to deal with emotional issues to continue their studies and achieve their academic goals (Storrie et al., 2010). In addition, personal development seminars can be organized to contribute to personality development. At this point, physicians, nurses and other health professionals working at the university and psycho-social service workers have important duties (Getachew, 2019; Storrie et al., 2010). For the development of a country, identifying the mental problems experienced by university students, who are considered the most dynamic force for the development of the community, and planning appropriate programs are of great importance for both individual and social development. Therefore, it would be a rational approach for universities and health professionals to organize mental health promotion and protection programs for university students. Indeed, the mental health levels of students will affect not only themselves but also future generations (Geçkil & Yıldız, 2006; Yeşilyaprak, 1993).

The fact that this is a retrospective study covering a period of seven years is a limitation for some statistical analyses and interpretation of the results. Multicenter retrospective and prospective studies will provide more enlightening insights into psychosocial problems in university students. In universities, the effectiveness of counseling and guidance centers can be increased by means of service models appropriate to student profile and university structure (Erkan, Cihangir Çankaya et al., 2012; İkiz & Mete Otlu, 2015). It is important for the university psychological counseling and guidance centers to plan and provide services by taking into consideration the problems and needs of the students (Erkan, Cihangir Çankaya et al., 2012). The results of this study will provide important information for planning and implementing mental health protection development programs for university students and for multidisciplinary studies aimed at protecting and improving mental health. As stated by İkiz and Mete Otlu (2015), it is recommended that students should meet the staff of the psychological counseling and guidance center as early as the first days in university, and those regular programs should be organized for students and educators. From the beginning of the university to the graduation, health programs including a regular monitoring with a record and follow-up system should be established (Getachew, 2019). University psychological counseling and guidance centers should be improved to be more functional, university

students should be given mental health improvement programs in line with their needs, and personality development and mental-health-problem prevention programs should be executed (İkiz & Mete Otlı, 2015). In developing personality traits, it is recommended to apply individual/group psychoeducation programs, psychological counseling and group guidance and support programs. Considering the fact that university students, who are struggling to deal with the issues originating from adolescence, use ineffective methods to cope with their existing or future problems, implementation of trainings, seminars, and awareness programs for these young people will increase their support-receiving behavior from the university guidance and counseling units, and the health professionals.

## REFERENCES

- Atik, G. & Yalçın, İ. (2010). Counseling needs of educational sciences students at the Ankara University. *Procedia-Social Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 1520-1526. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.228>
- Blanco, C., Okuda, M., Wright, C., Hasin, D. S., Grant, B. F., Liu, S.M., & Olfson, M. (2008). Mental health of college students and their non-college-attending peers: Results from the national epidemiologic study on alcohol and related conditions. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 65, 1429-1437. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.65.12.1429>
- Ceyhan, E. & Ceyhan, A. A. (2011). Loneliness and depression levels of students using a university counseling center. *Education and Science*, 36(160), 81-92. <http://egitimvebilim.ted.org.tr/index.php/EB/article/view/336>
- Cömert, E., & Gizir, C. (2020). Dark triad among university students: The predictive roles of HEXACO personality traits. *Studies in Psychology*, 40(1), 127-159. <https://doi.org/10.26650/SP2019-0031>
- Demirhan, H., Yapıcı, G. & Ayoğlu, F. (2012, October 02-06). Üniversite mediko sosyal biriminde psikolojik danışmanlık alan öğrencilerin geriye dönük değerlendirilmesi [Retrospective evaluation of students who received psychological counseling in the medico-social unit of the university] [Conference presentation]. Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> National Public Health Congress, Bursa, Turkey. [https://halksagligiokulu.org/jm/index.php/component/booklibrary/119/view\\_bl/84/ulusal-halk-sagl-g-kongreleri/25/15-ulusal-halk-sagl-g-kongre-sagl-k-%20%20reformlar-kitab?tab=getmybooksTab&is\\_show\\_data=1&Itemid=119](https://halksagligiokulu.org/jm/index.php/component/booklibrary/119/view_bl/84/ulusal-halk-sagl-g-kongreleri/25/15-ulusal-halk-sagl-g-kongre-sagl-k-%20%20reformlar-kitab?tab=getmybooksTab&is_show_data=1&Itemid=119)
- Dündar, S. (2009). Üniversite öğrencilerinin kişilik özellikleri ile problem çözme becerileri arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi [Analyzing the relationship between problem solving skills and personality characteristics of university students]. *Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Journal*, 24(2), 139-150. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/211084>
- Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E., & Gollust, S. E. (2007). Help-seeking and access to mental health care in a university student population. *Medical Care*, 45, 594-601. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0b013e31803bb4c1>
- Eisenberg, D., Hunt, J., Speer, N., & Zivin, K. (2011). Mental health service utilization among college students in the United States. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 199(5), 301-308. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0b013e3182175123>
- Erdur Baker, Ö. & Bıçak, B. (2006). Üniversite öğrencilerinin psikolojik sorunları [Psychological problems of college students]. *Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Journal of Faculty of Education*, 6(2), 54-66. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/16576>
- Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Erkan, S., Cihangir Çankaya, Z., Terzi, Ş. & Özbay, Y. (2012). Üniversite Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Merkezlerinin incelenmesi [An assessment of university counseling and guidance centers]. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal of Education Faculty*, 1(22), 174-198. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mauefd/issue/19395/206011>
- Erkan, S., Özbay, Y., Cihangir Çankaya, Z., & Terzi, Ş. (2012). Üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları problemler ve psikolojik yardım arama gönüllükleri [University students' problem areas and psychological help-seeking willingness]. *Education and Science*, 37(164), 94-107. <http://egitimvebilim.ted.org.tr/index.php/EB/article/view/402>
- Eryılmaz, A. (2017). Pozitif psikoterapiler [Positive psychotherapies]. *Current Approaches in Psychiatry*, 9(3), 346-362. <https://doi.org/10.18863/pgy.288667>
- Geçkil, E. & Yıldız, S. (2006). Adolescent health behaviors and problems. *Journal of Hacettepe University School of Nursing*, 3, 26-34. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/88588>

- Getachew, A. (2019). Assessment of psychological counseling service for higher education institution students. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 7(4), 53-61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.7n.4p.53>
- Gizir, C. A. (2010). Üniversite Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Merkezleri'nin rol ve işlevleri: gelişmeler ve sınırlılıklar [Roles and functions of university counseling services: Developments and limitations]. *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 6(2), 11-25. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mersinefd/issue/17376/181440>
- Gulliver, A., Griffiths, K. M., & Christensen, H. (2010). Perceived barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking in young people: A systematic review. *BMC Psychiatry*, 10(1), 113. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244X-10-113>
- Higher Education Institutions, Medico-Social, Health, Culture and Sports Affairs Department Implementation Regulation 1984. (1984, February 3). <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=10169&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5>
- Holm-Hadulla, R. M., & Koutsoukou-Argyragi, A. (2015). Mental health of students in a globalized world: Prevalence of complaints and disorders, methods and effectivity of counseling, structure of mental health services for students. *Mental Health & Prevention*, 3(1-2), 1-4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2015.04.003>
- Hunt, J., & Eisenberg, D. (2010). Mental health problems and help-seeking behavior among college students. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46(1), 3-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.08.008>
- İkiz, F. E., & Mete Otlu, B. (2015). Üniversite yaşamına uyum sürecinde yaşanan sorunlar ve başa çıkma yolları [The problems faced in the process of adapting the university life and the ways of dealing with these problems]. *Celal Bayar University Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(4), 35-51. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/cbayarsos/issue/24865/262727>
- İnanç, N., Savaş, H. A., Tutkun, H., Herken, H. & Savaş, E. (2004). Gaziantep Üniversitesi Mediko-Sosyal Merkezi'nde psikiyatrik açıdan incelenen öğrencilerin klinik ve sosyo-demografik özellikleri [The clinical and sociodemographic characteristics of the students psychiatrically examined at the Medico-Social Center of Gaziantep University]. *Anatolian Journal of Psychiatry*, 5(4), 222-230. <https://app.trdizin.gov.tr/makale/TkRRMk1qWII/gaziantep-universitesi-mediko-sosyal-merkezi-nde-psikiyatrik-acidan-incelenen-ogrencilerin-klinik-ve-sosyo-demografik-ozellikleri>
- Janetius, S. (2016). Evidence-based mental health counselling model for college students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology* 4 (8), 167-176. <https://ijip.in/articles/evidence-based-mental-health-counselling-model-for-college-students/>
- Kacur, M. & Atak, M. (2011). Üniversite öğrencilerinin sorun alanları ve sorunlarla başetme yolları: Erciyes Üniversitesi örneği [Problems fields of university students and cope with the problems: Erciyes University sample]. *Erciyes University Journal of the Social Sciences*, 1(31), 273-297. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/erusosbilder/issue/23765/253325>
- Karataş, A. & Gizir, C. A. (2013). Üniversite öğrencilerinin psikolojik danışma gereksinimlerinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi [An investigation of the university students' counseling needs related to some variables]. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education*, 28(3), 250-265. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/hunefd/issue/7791/101920>
- Kızıldağ, S., Demirtaş Zorbaz, S., Gençtanırım, D. & Arıcı, F. (2012). Hacettepe Üniversitesi öğrencilerinin psikolojik danışma yardımı almaya ve bu yardımın sunulduğu birimlere ilişkin görüşleri [Hacettepe University students' perceptions of getting psychological counseling help and the units which provide the help]. *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 8(3), 185-196. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mersinefd/issue/17381/181578>

- Macaskill, A. (2013). The mental health of university students in the United Kingdom. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 41(4), 426-441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2012.743110>
- Özgüven, İ. E. (1992). Üniversite öğrencilerinin sorunları ve baş etme yolları [The problems of university students and coping]. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education*, 7, 5-13. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/hunefd/issue/7829/102956>
- Pektaş, İ. & Bilge, A. (2007). Ege Üniversitesi İzmir Atatürk Sağlık Yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin problem alanlarının belirlenmesi [Determination of problem areas of the students of Ege University School of Health]. *İnönü University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 8(14), 83-98. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/92345>
- Rickwood, D., Deane, F. P., Wilson, C. J., & Ciarrochi, J. (2005). Young people's help-seeking for mental health problems. *Australian e-journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 4(3), 218-251. <https://doi.org/10.5172/jamh.4.3.218>
- Rith-Najarian, L., Sun, W., Chen, A., Chorpita, B., Chavira, D., Mougalian, S., & Gong-Guy, E. (2019). What's in a name? Branding of online mental health programming for university students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 87(4), 380-391. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000383>
- Sevinç, S. & Gizir, C. A. (2014). Üniversite birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin bakış açılarından üniversiteye uyumu olumsuz etkileyen faktörler (Mersin Üniversitesi örneği [Factors negatively affecting university adjustment from the views of first-year university students: The case of Mersin University]. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 14(4), 1285-1308. <https://app.trdizin.gov.tr/makale/TWpZeU5qTXpNdz09/universite-birinci-sinif-ogrencilerinin-bakis-acilarindan-universiteye-uyumu-olumsuz-etkileyen-faktorler-mersin-universitesi-ornegi>
- Storrie, K., Ahern, K., & Tuckett, A. (2010). A systematic review: students with mental health problems- a growing problem. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, 16(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-172X.2009.01813.x>
- Şimşek, Z., Koruk, İ., & Altındağ, A. (2007). Harran Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi ve Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin riskli sağlık davranışları [Health risk behaviors of first year students of Harran University Medical Faculty and Faculty of Science and Letters]. *Bulletin of Community*, 26(3), 19-24. [http://www.thb.hacettepe.edu.tr/arsiv/2007/sayi\\_3/baslik4.pdf](http://www.thb.hacettepe.edu.tr/arsiv/2007/sayi_3/baslik4.pdf)
- The Law on Higher Education 1981. (2020, April 15). <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.2547.pdf>
- Topkaya, N. & Meydan, B. (2013). Üniversite öğrencilerinin problem yaşadıkları alanlar, yardım kaynakları ve psikolojik yardım alma niyetleri [University students' problem areas, sources of help, and intentions to seek psychological help]. *Trakya University Journal of Education*, 3(1), 25-37. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/trkefd/issue/21475/230178>
- Türküm, A. S., Kızıldaş, A. & Sarıyer, A. (2004). Anadolu Üniversitesi Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Merkezi'nin hedef kitlesinin psikolojik ihtiyaçlarına ilişkin ön çalışma [Pilot study of psychological needs of target group of Anadolu University Counseling and Guidance Center]. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 3(21), 15-27. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tpdrd/issue/21441/229625>
- Villacura, L., Irarrázabal, N., Dörr, A., Zamorano, C., Manosalva, J., Cánovas, C., ... & Barra, N. (2015). Mental disorders of students at the University of Chile. *Mental Health & Prevention*, 3, 21-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2015.05.002>
- Yeşilyaprak, B. (1993). Üniversitelerimizde psikolojik danışma ve rehberlik hizmetleri [The guidance and counseling services in our universities]. *Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 1(4), 12-15. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/200234>



- Yorgason, J. B., Linville, D., & Zitzman, B. (2008). Mental health among college students: Do those who need services know about and use them? *Journal of American College Health, 57*(2), 173-182. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JACH.57.2.173-182>
- Zivin, K., Eisenberg, D., Gollust, S. E., & Golberstein, E. (2009). Persistence of mental health problems and needs in a college student population. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 117*(3), 180-185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2009.01.001>

### **About Authors**

**Şerife Koç** obtained her bachelor's degree in nursing; graduate and PhD degrees in Public Health Nursing from Istanbul University. She recently works as an assistant professor at Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing. Her research interests include public health, community mental health, and health promotion.

**Esra Öksüz** received her bachelor's degree in psychology at 2009 from Uludağ University. She is currently working at Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University as a psychologist. Her research interests include clinical psychology.

**Fatma Ayhan** is assistant professor in the field of Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing. She holds a master's degree in anatomy and nursing; bachelor of Nursing, and Sociology. She received her PhD in the department of Psychiatric Nursing. She works on risk assessment, risk management, mental health, attachment.

### **Author Contribution**

This study was conducted by all the authors working together and cooperatively. All of the authors substantially contributed to this work in each step of the study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

It has been reported by the authors that there is no conflict of interest.

### **Funding**

No funding support was received.

### **Ethical Statement**

This study was completed in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. In line with this, the study was permitted by Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Non-interventional Clinical Trials Ethics Committee. **Ethics Committee Name:** Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Non-interventional Clinical Trials Ethics Committee.

**Approval Date:** 11.03.2021

**Approval Document Number:** E-95728670-020-10067