



## Adaptation Problems at Regional Boarding Schools from the Perspective of the School Counselors

Canan ÇİTİL AKYOL<sup>a</sup>  Mustafa KUTLU<sup>b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Cumhuriyet University, Sivas, Turkey. <sup>b</sup>Inonu University, Malatya, Turkey.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received:** 05.07.23

**Accepted:** 11.09.23

### KEYWORDS

Adaptation Problems;  
Regional Boarding Schools;  
School Counselor; Focus  
Group.

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore students' adaptation problems at regional boarding schools from the perspective of the school's psychological counselors. Focus group discussions were carried out with eight psychological counselors working at different regional boarding schools in Türkiye. The results showed that the reasons for adaptation problems of regional boarding school students can be grouped under three main themes. These themes encompass students' separation from their families, the change in living conditions, and the emotions they feel about other students' lives. Furthermore the results showed how these problems can be identified under five main themes; and it was noteworthy that these themes encompass both students' deliberate actions and actions they unconsciously carry out. The study also offers insights into addressing these problems through four main themes. These themes have demonstrated the importance of counseling services, students' sense of belonging and unity, and the significance of having similar experiences. Based on the research findings, recommendations were made to develop school orientation psychoeducation programs, integrate the peer counseling system into school adjustment studies, and design studies that examine the risky behaviors of regional boarding school students in depth.

A family environment is best for children to flourish. Unfortunately, due to increasing rates of divorce, separation, death of one of the parents, neglect and abuse, some family members are deprived of the opportunity to live together as mother, father and child/ren (Gander and Gardiner, 2010). When the burden of being a single parent is combined with various economic difficulties, parents may prefer a public school where their school-age children can stay (Sönmez, 2000). Moreover, a large part of the population in Türkiye live in villages, smaller towns, hamlets, highlands and even nomadic groups, especially in the regions of the Black Sea, Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (Öztürk, Hilton and Jongerden, 2014). Extreme weather conditions, disease and financial problems in remote school districts in these regions affect school attendance negatively (Ulutaş and Yayan, 2017).

One of the most important reasons why children leave their families behind is to have access to education. In order for children to continue their education, even if they are far from the family environment, Regional Boarding Schools (RBS) which provide boarding or daytime education in settlements such as villages, hamlets, and plateaus far from the city centers are preferred by families. Additional benefits include access to health care and catering services and shelter (Uysal, 2016).

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR** Canan ÇİTİL AKYOL, [canancitil@gmail.com](mailto:canancitil@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-1596-5097, Cumhuriyet University, Sivas, Turkey.

This is an article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. As the original work is properly cited, reproduction in any medium is permitted.

© 2023 The Authors. Turkish Journal of Counseling Psychology and Guidance is published by Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association

Regional boarding elementary schools are for school aged children in scarcely populated areas where there is not a school so that they have access to a free compulsory education. Children living in the same neighborhoods as the school can attend as day students (Official Gazette, 2003, 25212). In 2012, the name of the schools was changed to Regional Boarding Schools (Official Gazette, 2012, 28360). What makes these schools stand out amongst other elementary schools is that they board students. Boarding schools are open 24/7, whereas other schools are only open during specific hours (8 am – 3 pm). Thus, RBSs serve as a second home for children as they have to meet all their needs at school (Eraslan, 2009).

Students, who would otherwise not be able to attend schools due to their family's financial disparities, are welcomed at RBSs. There are studies showing that girls in particular do not attend school in cities in the east of Türkiye and in the villages of these cities (Smits and Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2006). Girls are less likely to be sent to school than boys due to economic difficulties. The fact that the child who is preferred to receive education is a boy is related to the traditional understanding that gives particular importance to men over women in these regions (Cokamay et al., 2014; Yalın et al., 2004). Thanks to RBSs, more girls have access to education and most importantly, RBSs provide children a safe haven away from terrorist acts. On the other hand, students can also experience problems while attending RBSs; for example, bedwetting, depression, aggression, contagious diseases and homesickness are common. Children need to learn how to live with their peers without their kindred, and share sorrows, happiness and excitement. This makes RBSs both a "school" and "home." Schools being homes at the same time bring about several problems (Başarır and Parman, 2009). Amongst the most important problems that occur are the lack of continuance of family support (Şenol and Yıldız, 2009), feelings of inadequacy and concerns for the future (Çetin, 2013), and high rates of diseases (Özcan et al., 2013). Based on this information, it can be said that boarding schools play a significant role in the education of girls, in particular. Taking into consideration that students live apart from their families, it is crucial to address a wide range of student needs, from health issues to concerns about the future.

Students eat breakfast, lunch and dinner at school and can return home on weekends if they wish to do so. However, as RBSs are more prevalent, especially in the east of Türkiye, where the winter conditions are tough and the roads are closed with snow on weekends, students often cannot go home even if they want to (İnal and Sadık, 2014). It is to be expected that students will experience problems when they spend prolonged periods of time at school at RBSs. Foremost amongst these issues is being away from family and adaptation problems, which are important enough to be discussed at Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) (Eraslan, 2006). When examining the international literature, it is observed that boarding schools are mostly for adolescents, and prominent issues include mental health (Aisyaroh and Ediyono, 2023; Hopkins et al., 2023), psychological resilience (Langham et al., 2018; Redman-MacLaren et al., 2017), loneliness (Baru, et al., 2020; Rudrum, 2020), and adaptation (Sri-Wahyuni and Barus, 2020; Su et al., 2019). Hence, there is a need for effective psychological guidance and counseling services to support the psychological and social development of the students at RBSs and help them with their emotional problems (Atli, 2018; Pavletic et al., 2016).

Like every school in Türkiye, RBSs are also affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. The Ministry publishes various regulations in order to facilitate the execution of psychological counseling and guidance services. Clause 8.b and 8.c in the Psychological Guidance and Counseling Services Regulations state that "these services are to be carried out within the context of educational, vocational, personal/social guidance and counseling for students to be able to adapt to school, to develop a positive attitude towards learning and educational settings, and to recognize the characteristics of the developmental period they are in" (Official Gazette, 2017, 30236). This information sheds light on the importance of orientation programs for children who begin their education in boarding schools, especially when starting a new life away from their families.

Adaptation to school refers to conditions such as being aware of emotions, using skills to cope with stress, fulfilling given instructions, performing tasks in and out of the classroom, and collaborating with other students, as well as readiness and academic skills (Commoradi, 2012). The fact that the children might be worried about the family members they left behind, and the expectations of teachers could be above the child's developmental characteristics are among the reasons that make it difficult to adapt to school. However, no

special planning was found for RBSs to solve the adaptation problems when the literature was reviewed (Oktay, 2018; Özaslan and Baba-Öztürk, 2022).

There is a large body of quantitative research comparing students from RBSs to others in terms of self-value (Ferrah, 2014; Kahraman, 2009; Köksal-Akyol and Salı, 2013), self-care (Bekar, 2006; Özcan, 2009) and qualitative interviews carried out with teachers, students and administrators at RBSs (Boydak-Özan et al., 2012; Çetinkaya and Gelişli, 2014); however, there are no qualitative or experimental studies on the adaptation problems of RBS students and teachers. Thus, this study is vital as it thoroughly examines adaptation problems of RBS students from the perspective of psychological counselors who work at these schools.

RBS students begin their school life away from their families and in unfamiliar settings. Understandably, they may experience more adaptation issues compared to day students. Kahraman (2009) asserts that RBS students lack the strength to deal with problems and mental health issues when compared to students from normal schools. She concluded that students that interacted less with the school environment were directly affected by this situation. Liu and Villa (2020) focused on the cognitive, physical, and mental health issues experienced by students who continue their education in boarding schools as a result of their parents' migration in China. The research results suggest that boarding school conditions should be improved not only to enhance cognitive skills but also to contribute to the physical and mental health of students. Our study explores a variety of adaptation issues village students face upon enrolling in a RBS from the perspective of psychological counselors. The results of the study will assist in the planning of future orientation programs. It is expected that students who have managed to adapt to the school environment and developed a sense of belonging will have better mental health. Moreover, once they are supported emotionally, cognitively and socially, students with adaptation problems will have higher satisfaction levels in the educational experiences.

RBSs in Türkiye host children who are in the risk group and the students there experience various problems. The fact that students start their education by staying away from their families and that they come from low socioeconomic regions are among the reasons why students are seen as high-risk groups. Although the studies focus on the various problems of the students (Ulutaş and Yayan, 2017; Yıldız and Kula-Şanlı, 2012), the data on the adaptation process are insufficient. In their research comparing the behaviors of adolescents aged 11-19, both those residing in boarding schools and those who do not, Noll et al. (2020) reported that students in boarding schools engaged in more risky behaviors, such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and engaging in risky sexual relationships. In light of all this information, the aim of this research is to analyze the factors that cause adaptation problems and to what extent, if any, their relationship with the adaptation processes. Our intentions are that the findings can be used to better design curriculum which is more suitable to students' needs. In the light of this information, the aim of this study is to reach in-depth data on understanding the adjustment problems experienced by students from the perspective of psychological counselors working in RBSs. Specifically, answers are sought to the following research problems:

- According to the psychological counselors, what are the reasons that students experience adaptation problems?
- How do the psychological counselors identify students that experience adaptation problems?
- What methods do psychological counselors employ to reduce the adaptation problems of students?

## Method

### Design

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of school counselors working in regional boarding schools regarding the adaptation problems experienced by RBS students. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to investigate how individuals perceive and interpret their own or other people's life experiences. In this study, we tried to shed light onto the experiences of RBS students during their adaptation period to the school and how they interpreted these experiences from the school counselors' perspective. Thus, we chose to employ the qualitative research method (Merriam, 2013). In this research, a phenomenological research design has been employed. Creswell (2007) states that the phenomenological research design aims to conduct an assessment based on individuals' life experiences. At this point, not only perceptions and experiences but also how these perceptions and experiences are formed are addressed in this design (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Since

this research examines the adaptation problems experienced in boarding schools based on the experiences of school psychological counselors, a phenomenological design has been chosen. Qualitative research focuses on describing events and phenomena in their natural environments, understanding, and reflecting the perspectives of the participants, with an inductive approach. Unlike quantitative research, which is based on the positivist paradigm, qualitative research is far from making generalizations (Putnam, 1983). In this study, qualitative paradigm was employed since we aimed to investigate the adaptation problems of RBS students with their unique dimensions and to make in-depth discoveries from the perspective of school psychological counselors. In qualitative research, data can be collected through focus group interviews. Focus group interviews, which are frequently used in educational research, are one of the systemic data collection methods (Kitzinger, 1995). The aim of the focus group interviews is to obtain in-depth, detailed, and multidimensional qualitative data about the perspectives, experiences, thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes of the participants about a certain topic (Bowling, 2002). A rich flow of information is provided as a result of in-group interaction. Moreover, the aim of the focus group interviews is to reveal how the participants perceive the subject being studied rather than making explanations about the participants. Despite all its positive aspects, it is often difficult to predict what will come out of the focus group interviews due to its open-ended nature. For this reason, it is recommended to discuss a limited number of concepts or topics (Edmunds, 2000). In this context, eight psychological counselors working in the regional boarding schools were reached by using purposeful sampling in determining the focus group. Purposeful sampling can be used to gather rich data from experiences in qualitative research (Patton, 2014). The inclusion criteria for the study were determined as being employed in boarding schools in rural areas and having a degree in psychological counseling and guidance.

### **Participants**

All participants are psychological counselors working at RBSs located in different regions of Türkiye. There is a total of 8 participants (3 females, 5 males). Three participants from the Mediterranean Region (Kahramanmaraş/n=1 and Adana/n=2), three participants from the Central Anatolia Region (Aksaray/n=1, Eskişehir/n=1, and Sivas/n=1), one participant from the Marmara Region (Istanbul/n=1), and one participant from the Eastern Anatolia Region (Erzurum/n=1) voluntarily decided to participate in the study. Participants are aged between 26-33 and have worked at RBSs between 5-10 years. Participants agreed to take part in the study voluntarily and each participant signed a "participant consent form" beforehand. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and these pseudonyms were used in the findings section of the research.

### **Collecting Data**

After having obtained the Ethics Committee Approval for the research, a face-to-face meeting was held at the Psychological Counseling Unit in İnönü University with the volunteer participants to collect data through the focus group interview. The opinions of school psychological counselors were asked by employing questions such as "What do you think the source of your students' adaptation problems is?", "How does the process of applying to the guidance service work for students who have adjustment problems?". The discussion, which lasted for 2 hours 46 minutes and 32 seconds, was audio recorded with the consent of the participants. The interview questions for the focus group discussion were prepared in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire. The interview questions were organized and finalized after obtaining input from two experts with doctoral degrees in the field of Guidance and Psychological Counseling. The semi-structured form was used in the study to ensure that the focus group discussion progresses along a specific axis while also allowing the researcher the necessary flexibility.

### **Analyzing Data**

Thematic analysis procedures defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were employed for data analysis. Accordingly, to become familiar with the data, transcripts were initially read from start to finish without any coding. In the second step, the data set was re-read and coded. This was done to ensure coder reliability. Coder reliability is achieved through the process of reconfiguration at different time intervals (Miles & Huberman, 2016). In the third step, five randomly selected data sets were provided to and analyzed by three faculty

members with doctoral degrees in the Department of Counseling and Guidance to ensure a member check procedure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in accordance with the different perspectives of various experts. Experts identified some inconsistencies between codes, subthemes, and main themes. After examining the differences in coding and their rationales, consensus was reached on the final codes, subthemes, and main themes. In the fourth step, coded quotations identified by the authors of the study were rechecked by comparing them with the entire data set. In the fifth step, the contents and boundaries of the themes were clarified, and possible relationships with other themes were reviewed. In the sixth step, the data set and emerging themes underwent a final analysis, and vivid, clear, and persuasive data quotations, representing the voices of the participants, were selected for inclusion in the final report. Finally, the results of the thematic analysis were written in relation to the research questions and relevant literature. For example, homesickness, family elders, attitudes of parents were identified variables labeled with temporary codes; once the relationship amongst the variables was aggregated, a binomial variable was created and coded “With or Without Family.”

**Validity of the Study**

To ensure the validity of the data, investigator triangulation, member checking, and thick descriptions (Creswell, 2014) were employed in the study. Investigator triangulation is the analysis of the same data by several different investigators and comparing the results (Patton, 2002). Transcriptions were read by three different faculty members from the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department and the possible themes were agreed upon.

Member checking allows the participants to review the draft so that each can confirm the researcher interprets their ideas correctly. This also helps the researcher by pointing out any problematic parts in case of publication and provides new ideas and solutions (Patton, 2002). Each participant in this study received the findings and results chapters via e-mail and gave feedback on them. Thick descriptions allow the readers to decide on the transmissibility of the study because the writer provided detailed descriptions of the participants and the research environment (Creswell, 2014). Direct quotations were used in this study to reflect the emotions and opinions of the participants.

**Findings**

Themes identified following the analysis of the focus group discussion with the psychological counselors were grouped under each research question and explained using direct quotations of the participants. Accordingly, the causes for the adaptation problems of RBS students were grouped under 3 main themes; the noticing of the adaptation problems of RBS students was grouped under 5 main themes; and solutions regarding the adaptation problems of RBS students were grouped under 4 main themes. Below the themes are the codes associated with that theme. The frequency of the codes was shown in the tables and these codes were used while explaining the themes.

**Findings on the causes for the adaptation problems of RBS students**

Differences in family structure due to perceived parental attitudes of students, divorce, loss of a parent, and history of violence are grouped under the main theme of “*With or Without Family.*” Problems that students faced when they first left their villages are grouped under “*Everything Is So Different.*” Students with adaptation problems imitating positive and negative behaviors of their friends are grouped under “*Envyng the Lives of Others.*” The table below shows the frequency of main themes and codes associated with the causes for the adaptation problems of RBS students.

**Table 1.** Causes for the adaptation problems of RBS Students

Theme	Codes	f	Total
<i>With or Without Family</i>	Homesickness	23	59
	Family Structure (Divorce, Death etc.)	19	
	Attitudes of Parents	17	
<i>Everything Is So Different</i>	First Year at the RBS	28	59
	Hygiene Problems	12	
	Academic Success	11	
	Attitudes of Teachers	8	



<i>Envyng the Lives of Others</i>	“They Go Home Every Week”	13	24
	“Their Families Visit Them”	11	

**"With or Without Family".** Psychological counselors agreed that students often missed their families during their first year at RBSs. Feelings associated with *homesickness* are one of the most important reasons that hinders the adaptation process to the school environment. Students with good family relations experience more homesickness than their friends. In addition, parents' attitudes are also one of the causes for adaptation problems. According to Counselor Mehmet, *"Being away from parents, siblings and the village wears out children as they try hard to adapt to a new environment. The kids feel "motherlessness" when they go to bed every night."* **Family structure** is also a reason of adaptation problems. Children that miss their families a lot may experience anger or disappointment if they are unable to meet their families. These emotions are considered as part of adaptation problems by the counselors. Counselor Meltem gives the following example, *"I felt insufficient when a student attempted to jump out of the window because he didn't want to stay at the dormitory. I somehow couldn't communicate with the kid at all. His mother is out of the family picture; she'd left the family years ago. His step-mother has children from a previous relationship, all of which are older, and they all live in the same house. He never stopped trying to run away from school. He can get into a fight with strangers and come back with bruises. He hates his father and wants him at his side at the same time. His behavior has never changed."* Counselor Kerem, who thinks family structure and features are the main reason for adaptation problems declares: *"We have kids who we label as maladaptive. However, these kids come from broken families and have serious inner conflicts. They lack all sorts of parental control and structure. There are no rules in the family that they can adopt, they are outside on the streets all day until they are in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade and they have acquired bad habits along the way. They grow up in such freedom that they obviously have difficulty following the rules and adapting to the school environment."* All of the psychological counselors agree that **attitudes of the parents** can and do increase the students' adaptation problems. Counselor Ismail, who witnessed both characteristics from parents, that being overly protective and indifferent towards their children, revealed *"Some parents try to visit the kids at school every day. They don't even give the kids enough time to adapt to the school, so kids naturally wait for them every single day. On the other hand, some parents never visit. They behave as if their livestock at home was more valuable than their kids and they think 'Oh, what could ever happen to the kid at school?' We can't expect the kids to grow out of adaptation problems when they have these kinds of parents."*

The research findings indicate that students often miss their families during their initial period at RBSs, and the feelings associated with homesickness, which are linked to the sense of being away from home, are shown to be one of the most significant factors negatively affecting the school adaptation process. Furthermore, it is found that parental attitudes also contribute to students' adaptation problems, with these attitudes, especially when parents are overly protective or indifferent towards their children, being identified as potential factors that can exacerbate adaptation difficulties.

**"Everything Is So Different".** School psychological counselors highlight that students who start secondary school at RBS tend to have more adaptation problems than students who start primary school. School subjects, teachers and even the physical surroundings of the school feel strange to them and they feel alienated in both the school and dormitory. Counselor Hanife points out that *"Children who have just started school and immediately have to stay in the dormitory have more adaptation problems. We can help first graders overcome adaptation problems easily, but fifth graders have a lot of difficulty."* Furthermore, a drop in a student's academic success who was previously enrolled in multigrade classes and then started to attend a RBS plays a role in creating adaptation problems. Counselor Ismail implies that *"Almost none of the students who have transferred from multigrade classes know how to read and write. They aren't willing to learn and even the ones who know how to read and write a bit don't want to improve. They even graduate just like that. Kids who aren't successful in school start having problems in the dormitory. Academic success directly affects the adaptation process."* Some students, who have come from impoverished settings, don't know how to benefit from the school and dormitory facilities. Many lack basic hygienic awareness, such as bathing and using indoor toilets; this also leads to further adaptation problems students suffer from. The opinions of Counselor Ayşe

summarize the opinions of others as well: *“Personal hygiene and cleanliness are among the adaptation problems seen at dormitories. The majority of kids wear shoes without socks, don’t clip their fingernails and don’t eat anything they haven’t eaten in their villages. Hygiene is a big problem because these kids need to wash their hands before meals and brush their teeth before bed. They need to take a shower regularly. They don’t have to do any of these in the village. They wash up once in fifteen days if there is hot water. They don’t know how to use the facilities at school and in the dormitory.”*

In many of the village schools, the students had only one teacher for all subjects; however, each subject is taught by a different teacher in an RBS. They may have difficulty adapting to the personality of each teacher. Teachers responsible for education in RBSs also work in the hostel of the school. Every day, two male and two female teachers work in shifts, and they are held responsible for both the safety and health problems of the children in the hostel. In addition, they have to control if the students follow the rules such as eating / bathing / obeying the bedtime hours. The relationship that the teachers establish with the students in the school and the relationship they establish in the hostel can be confusing for the children. Furthermore, each teacher may have a different attitude towards a similar situation. Students are taken aback by different reactions of different teachers on the same topic and have problems with adapting to the school and dormitory environment. Counselor Hanife states, *“Some teachers wake students up too harshly in the mornings. What child would want to be woken up to a scolding?”* Counselor Serdar also thinks many of the teachers have negative attitudes. He adds that *“Teachers may treat students badly in the dormitory, they never listen to the ones who cry, for example.”* Similarly, Counselor Ismail refers to the differences between the attitudes of teachers; *“Some teachers tell students that they are garbage in the first lesson and some teachers hold them too dearly. This leaves students in the limbo.”*

In light of these findings, it can be stated that the physical and hygienic conditions of the school, especially for students coming from villages, are another factor contributing to adaptation problems. Students may encounter issues related to not knowing or following basic hygiene rules. Furthermore, the different behaviors and attitudes of various teachers can complicate students' adaptation to the school and dormitory environment. These variations can lead students to receive different responses from different teachers on the same subject, thus contributing to adaptation problems.

***"Envyng the Lives of Others"***. Jealousy and/or envying the lives of other students are another characteristic associated with adaptation problems. Psychological Counselor Serdar says, "If there's a group of three students and two of them are sick, the last one will fake an illness, ask for his/her mother, and want to return to their village." According to Psychological Counselor Hanife, "I notice the looks of those who are left behind when some families visit their children; they struggle between envying them and wishing they were in their place." Psychological Counselor İsmail also suggests that "some students, when others go home, start questioning why they were not allowed to go, why they have to stay, and eventually express their feelings of jealousy by saying they wish they didn't have to stay." Such actions accurately reflect that many students indeed prefer the lives of their peers.

**Findings on noticing the adaptation problems of RBS students**

*Frequent mood swings and risky behaviors* are categorized under ***“Kids in Danger.”*** *Applications to the Counseling Services* by both students and teachers are grouped under ***“A Cry for Help.”*** *Somatic pains* are grouped under ***“Growing Pains.”*** *Frequent phone calls* are grouped under ***“Hello, Are You There?”*** Lastly, *maladaptive behaviors* experienced on certain days of the week, are grouped under ***“Monday-Friday Syndrome.”***

**Table 2.** Noticing the adaptation problems of RBS students

Themes	Codes	f	Total
<i>Kids in Danger</i>	Mood Swings	19	31
	Risky Behaviors	12	
<i>A Cry for Help</i>	Applying to the Counseling Service	19	27
	Survey-Test Results	8	
<i>Growing Pains</i>	Somatic Pains	17	26
	Desire to Be Hospitalized	9	
<i>Hello, Are You There?</i>	Frequency of Using the Telephone	15	24

	Fighting in the Telephone Line	9	
Monday-Friday Syndrome	Not Attending School on Monday	14	24
	Going Back to Village before Friday	10	

**"Kids in Danger".** While describing specific mood swings that students display, the psychological counselors emphasized that students were not able to contain their emotions and behaviors. Students who feel as if they do not any control over their emotions or the risky behaviors they engage in tend to experience more adaptation problems. Counselor İsmail explained, *"I have an 8<sup>th</sup> grader who always displays depressive behaviors, feels insecure and thinks that nothing holds any meaning and he doesn't belong to the school environment. He thinks he doesn't have any control over anything, and this makes the situation worse."* Similarly, Counselor Ayşe commented that she had students who burst into tears and wanted to leave. *"These children experience emotional outbursts."*

Students experiencing adaptation problems are a bit easier to identify because of their tendency to display risky and depressive behaviors. For example, students who have had suicidal thoughts or have even attempted to commit suicide have family problems and/or adaptation problems that have not be fully addressed. Counselor Hanife admits that she, herself, felt insufficient as a psychological counselor with one of her students. *"A kid who grew up in the welfare service. He had some adaptation problems in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and the adults thought the best way was to sedate him. This neglected kid has been on anti-depressants since then. His social workers neglected him so much even though there is a protection from abuse order for him. They filled him with lies and empty promises. Naturally, he doesn't trust anyone and is prejudiced, especially against his teachers. We tried to keep him at school for two weeks. On his first day, civilian authorities including the mayor and the district attorney gathered at school together with the police officers because he created such a mayhem at the dormitory. I felt we were all insufficient because we couldn't get organized properly and win this kid back."*

Counselor Kerem added, *"I've students that smoked in the dormitory and even escaped from the dormitory. These students were usually the ones with adaptation problems. I've had kids who tend to be violent and had bursts of rage, kids who were extremely reserved, who cried in a corner and refused to eat. When these kids opened up in time, they expressed that they didn't know why they did what they did. They only knew they couldn't keep these outbursts under control."*

Counselor Mehmet's student, the one who had threatened to jump out of the window if he was not left alone, ended up running away from school several times. In a separate incident, Counselor Meltem revealed a student at her RBS had tried to stab himself with a blunt pair of scissors. Such self-destructive thoughts and behaviors can indeed be considered to be connected to adaptation problems.

**"A Cry for Help".** Identifying a student that is experiencing adaptation problems is not always an easy task. Sometimes teachers are able to identify the behavior in class and will refer the student to Counseling Services. In other cases, the students themselves will seek out help and apply for services. Counselor Ahmet states, *"I can identify these students through their teachers' feedback on the student's lack of concentration in class, which is usually a symptom of adaptation problems."* Counselor Kerem agrees, *"Classroom teachers and tutors are a great help to notice kids with adaptation problems. They approach us to say that a certain student never speaks up in the class, doesn't attend to the lessons regularly or uses profanity all the time and stops talking to their friends. Then we start the procedure for sessions with the student."*

Counselor Hanife explains, *"Because I am the school counselor and I listen to all the kids, students with adaptation problems feel that they can also talk to me."* Moreover, Counselor İsmail's example echoes Counselor Hanife's. *"When I am on night duty at the dormitory, students who see their friends speaking with me are more apt to freely approach me later at school."* These statements illustrate the importance of the relationship the school counselor builds with the students. Further, surveys and tests aimed at getting to know the students better can help them express themselves. Counselor Serdar expresses that *"Adaptation problems can become quite visible when I ask student to write biographies. Or I can identify children with problems after a sociometry or another test."*

In summary, identifying students experiencing adaptation problems can occur through observations by teachers in the classroom and sometimes through students seeking help themselves. Teachers' feedback plays



a crucial role in recognizing these students, especially when symptoms like lack of concentration are indicative of adaptation issues. The relationship established with the school counselor can facilitate students in expressing their problems, and surveys and tests prove to be useful tools for better understanding students.

**"Growing Pains"**. School psychological counselors observe that students with adaptation problems often suffer from physical pains and use this symptom as an excuse to return to their homes. Counselor Ahmet, who thinks these pains are mostly psychologically-rooted, describes: *"Kids start getting sick when the families are not here to pick them up. We had one student whose family couldn't visit her for a month and a half. She kept getting sick and only recovered after we managed to bring her family to school."*

Counselor Meltem highlights that somatic pains are related to adaptation problems. She recalled that *"One student had to be hospitalized by his parents almost every week due to severe stomach pains. His family moved after a while and the kid left the dormitory to stay with his family. He got never sick after that. It was all about adaptation problems."*

Counselors point out the fact that they can identify students with adaptation problems as they often get sick, try to skip classes due to stomach aches, and fake being sick after witnessing other students that get to go back home when they are really sick. Additionally, the frequency of going to the hospital is another sign that a student is suffering from adaptation problems. Counselor Mehmet comments that, *"Some students want to go to the hospital and see a doctor from the first day of school. They know that either their families will take them home or they will not have to attend the classes that day if they go to the hospital. Children start exploiting it. You've got to look into adaptation problems if a kid has developed a habit of going to the hospital."*

The research findings indicate that students experiencing adaptation problems often suffer from physical pains and use them as an excuse to return to their homes. It has been observed that these pains are typically of psychological origin and become more pronounced, especially when families are not able to visit. Additionally, somatic pains have been linked to adaptation problems, leading students to attempt to skip classes and mimic illness when they observe other students being allowed to return home when genuinely ill. The frequency of hospital visits has also been emphasized as a significant indicator for identifying students facing adaptation problems. These findings underscore the importance of observation and communication by teachers and school counselors in recognizing and providing support to students experiencing adaptation issues.

**"Hello, Are You There?"**. Another key to identifying students with adaptation problems is observing their frequency of using the telephone. All of the participating counselors agreed that students who want to call their families more than others are prone to have adaptation problems. Counselor Kerem admits that he cannot resist the students when they say they miss their mother and want to talk to her. Counselor Ayşe's agrees and claims that *"Students will demand to use the phone to find out if their families will visit them in the week; otherwise, they get into fights while waiting for their turn in the telephone line."* These statements show that teachers can use the phone calls as a temporary solution to ease adaptation problems, but it can cause negative relations among friends. Counselor Hanife explains how she identifies students with adaptation problems: *"Phone calls provide important insights when it comes to adaptation. If the students don't have a mobile phone, they can't talk to their families. They can only borrow their friends' phones. If they use the school phone and cannot reach their families, it ruins their day."*

Counselor Mehmet agrees, *"Asking to call the families is an important sign in identifying students with adaptation problems. Knowing which student wants to phone their parents and how often is important."*

Arguments that arise between students while waiting in the telephone line is another symptom. Counselor Hanife states that *"Students without problems don't create any disturbance while waiting in the line. They think to themselves that they will talk to their families tomorrow if not today. However, some children want to use the telephone only for themselves and get into fights in the line. I sometimes observe that these kids have adaptation problems."* In light of these findings, it can be said that observing students' telephone usage habits is an important way to identify adaptation problems. Especially, students who want to call their families more are more likely to experience adaptation problems. These findings indicate the importance of school staff being more sensitive to recognizing and providing support for students with adaptation problems.

**"Monday-Friday Syndrome"**. Another observable symptom that a student is experiencing adaptation problems is his/her sense of uneasiness specifically witnessed on Mondays and Fridays. Counselor Serdar

notes that *“Our students have adaptation problems on Mondays and Fridays. They don’t want to return to the dormitory from the village on Mondays. They nervously wait to see if their families will turn up to collect them on Fridays.”* Counselor Kerem adds, *“The rate of absenteeism is too high on Mondays. Students sometimes return to school on Tuesdays or Wednesdays and immediately start to use the phones to learn if they will go back home on Friday.”* Counselor Hanife’s experiences support these statements as well: *“We have more adaptation problems at school on Mondays and Fridays. Some families forget to pick their kids up on Fridays, so children keep waiting in vain. Then they don’t want to return to the dormitory on Mondays. Getting relocated every week feels difficult.”* Counselor Ahmet explains that *“Students put up a real fight on Monday mornings; therefore, they can’t adapt to school.”* Counselor Ayşe also agrees; *“The real problem starts on Fridays when some children go back home, and some have to stay at the dormitory. It is more difficult for the kids who are left here over the weekends.”* These findings indicate that students experiencing adjustment issues tend to have more pronounced problems on Mondays and Fridays in particular. Additionally, situations where some parents forget to pick up their children on Fridays can further exacerbate adjustment issues. These findings suggest that students may experience greater adjustment problems on specific days of the week and may require more attention and support during these time periods.

**Findings on reducing the number of adaptation problems of RBS students**

Individual and group work to reduce the number of adaptation problems, together with sessions in the dormitory, are grouped under **“24/7 Counseling Services.”** Cooperation between the school administration, teachers and the Counseling Services are grouped under **“One for All, All for One.”** Efforts to enhance the students’ sense of belonging to the school are grouped under **“Sense of Belonging”** and sessions carried out together with students with adaptation problems and their peers are grouped under **“Children with Similar Experiences.”**

**Table 3.** Reducing the number of adaptation problems of RBS students

Theme	Codes	f	Total
24/7 Counseling Services	Individual or Group Psychological Counseling and Guidance	21	44
	Visiting Dormitory in Case of Emergency	17	
	Becoming A Teacher-Counselor	6	
One for All, All for One	Cooperation between Administration-Teachers-Counseling Service	19	33
	Finding Financial Sources	9	
	Unity in Social Activities	5	
Sense of Belonging	Expanding Playgrounds	19	33
	Organizing Dormitory Activities	14	
Children with Similar Experiences	Having A Sibling at School	16	31
	Coming from The Same Village	9	
	Peer Orientation	7	

**“24/7 Counseling Services”.** School psychological counselors attempt to work through adaptation problems via individual sessions and group work. Individual sessions are preferred in emergency cases or family problems; although group work, is more suitable for students who are disobeying school rules or experiencing difficulties maintaining their personal hygiene. Counselor Ayşe’s statement is informative in the context of group work. She states, *“One of the main problems is following the school rules. Rules for the times to go to bed and get up, study hours, classroom hours, doing homework should all be provided for students as preventive measures. Then personal hygiene is also a big problem. We have to explain everything from how to use the toilets to brushing teeth and combing hair. I can even collaborate with the Public Health Center.”* Counselor Serdar adds, *“We showed all parts of the school to the groups of students on the smart board when the school started. We also carry out group work to inform students on how to behave in the library and the dining hall or that they should knock on the door before entering a room etc.”* Further, Counselor Hanife emphasizes the importance of group work, *“We debrief students on topics such as how and when to clip*

*fingerprints, how to use the toilets and showers, how to talk to the seniors, how to make a bed or why we should turn off lights."*

In commenting on the importance of individual sessions, Counselor Meltem explains, *"I carry out individual sessions with children who come from broken families or who were abused in the past and must stay in the dormitory. We are not always qualified to analyze what the children tell us, especially when these disadvantaged groups have adaptation problems. That's why, I think all RBS counselors should hold a master's degree at least."* Counselor İsmail believes that, *"Through individual sessions, I am able to better explain that this is a boarding school and we have rules here, that there are other children in similar situations, and they can support one another. I try to help them explore their own strengths. I try to help them understand that they are not weak, and they can overcome hardships."*

In addition to individual sessions and group work carried out at the RBSs, psychological counseling and guidance services are also provided in the dormitory. If an emergency occurs, a counselor will rush to the dormitory from home. Others carry out counseling services during their night shifts as teacher-counselors in the dormitory. Counselor Mehmet, who feels this role increases the teacher-counselors' responsiveness to address any issues that may arise, states, *"I had a night shift first day of the first week of school. Someone called me to the dormitory after bed time. One of the students, who just started fifth grade at our school, was crying. I spent an hour to calm him down. But I was able to follow up with him just because I had another night shift a couple of days later."* Counselor Ahmet adds; *"I often get phone calls in the evenings. A kid had fainted... Another is crying because she misses her mom... And I just go the dormitory to see these kids."* Counselor Kerem expresses the importance of being able to spend time with students in the dormitory: *"We have beanbag chairs in the dormitory for the students to use while studying, to read a book or to just chill. I also hang out with them there, reading a book. Sitting down for dinner or lunch together with the students who have problems but aren't willing to talk about them is also helpful."* In light of these findings, it can be observed that school psychological counselors attempt to address students' adjustment issues through individual sessions and group work, with group work being considered more suitable for students who do not adhere to school rules or experience difficulties in maintaining personal hygiene. Furthermore, the preference for individual sessions in emergency situations or family issues, and the active involvement of psychological counselors in ensuring the safety and well-being of boarding school students, is noteworthy.

**"One for All, All for One"**. All of the participants highlight that working together with a shared vision is vital to finding solutions for students suffering from adaptation problems. Counselor Kerem explains, *"It is necessary to come up with a common strategy as a whole school. Me deciding on strategies alone, only works to a certain extent. Adaptation problems become visible to the teachers first when the student starts crying in the lesson. Thus, we need to decide on a common strategy all together."* Counselor Ahmet suggests, *"We need to include school administration and other teachers. People own things when they work for it themselves, when they put effort in it, and they understand they will benefit from it indirectly if not directly. Teachers and the administration would benefit the most if we didn't have any adaptation problems."* Counselor Hanife's statement relays the importance of the school administrations that create financial resources to handle adaptation problems and the teachers who spend quality time with students. She states, *"I have experienced three different styles of school administration at RBSs. Our last principal was an exception on account of communicating with the children. Children know that someone cares for them if you ask questions like 'Do you like the food here?' and 'Are your rooms comfortable?' This increases the chances of adapting to the school environment. I think that educational materials are also important. We had two sets of chess at school and kids used to play chess all the time. It is important to create resources for such materials. Moreover, music and art teachers can carry out extra activities in their spare time. I mean it is not actually related to the subject you teach. It is important to spend some quality time with the students."* Counselor İsmail provides another example of activities that have helped resolve adaptation problems: *"We decide on an activity calendar for the students with adaptation problems at the beginning of each academic year. Activities like creative mind games, origami, chess and board games. We also have movie days and drama clubs. Teachers can organize activities based on their own interests and abilities. A teacher who knows how to play a musical instrument can organize a music night or introduce this instrument to the kids and teach them how to play. We benefited from this a lot. Both teachers and the school administration were bias against these types of activities at first. But they saw*

*how beneficial these could be and changed their minds. The number of activities increased. Administrations approve these activities especially when they are organized for the whole town in the town center because they feel proud of their schools."*

These findings indicate that, in order to assist students experiencing adaptation issues and overcome these problems, it is crucial for all school staff and administration to work together with a shared strategy and vision. Additionally, teachers who spend quality time with students and school administrations that allocate financial resources for this purpose play a significant role in resolving adaptation problems.

**"Sense of Belonging".** Another notion which emphasizes the importance of reducing adaptation problems is students' 'sense of belongingness.' Each of the participants mention that calming thoughts and feelings are associated with a sense of belonging to the school. Counselor Serdar thinks, *"A sense of belonging is the most important factor that brings the adaptation problems to a minimum. We now have very few students who impatiently wait to be picked up to go home every weekend. The main reasons for this are the opportunities provided by the school to the kids, especially from mountain villages. Newcomers want to stay at school over the weekends in order to benefit more from the facilities and games etc... They want to have fun a bit. They have the freedom to play games at school, so they feel that they belong to school."* Counselor Meltem sums of the relationship between a sense of belonging and playing games. She states that, *"When we asked ourselves how we could bring the adaptation problems to a minimum, we came up with the idea of playing games. If children spend quality time with their peers, if they have fun here, adaptation problems will decrease. Thus, we need to make this place more attractive to the children by building more playgrounds and theatres, by starting more drama clubs and by taking kids to more social activities."*

With regard to the importance of collaboration, Counselor Ayşe explains that, *"Maybe the problem is that we can't make these children feel at home here. School principals and teachers sometimes don't fully understand that children need activities that help them feel at home at school. For example, students take a dislike to school when they are immediately asked to do intense studies. Teachers and principals don't respond to us when we ask them to keep the study hours shorter for the newcomers and to show special interest to them."* Counselor Mehmet discusses what can be done to increase this sense of belongingness: *"Students and I organize surprises for the newcomers. We make a confetti rain when they first enter their rooms. Talking to them and making jokes with them are also helpful in the transition period. Dormitory life should feel normal not unusual for the kids to feel at home."* These findings indicate that a sense of belonging to the school plays a significant role in reducing adaptation problems among students. It is observed that offering students opportunities to have enjoyable experiences and play games with their peers, particularly, has a mitigating effect on adaptation issues. Additionally, the importance of the school administration and teachers providing special attention to new students and making them feel like the school is a home has been emphasized.

**"Children with Similar Experiences".** It is relatively easier to re-solve adaptation problems if students have older siblings and/or friends from the same village at school. Peer support has a vital role here. According to Counselor Kerem, *"In addition to the students with severe adaptation problems, we have children who can adapt to the school environment easily. Peer support, I mean kids helping out one another, is very important at this point. For example, kids explain the rules to the newcomers using a 'we language.' 'This is our dormitory, we stay here. We use the telephone at this hour. We behave like this in the dining hall.' Children try to teach one another, and I like that."*

Counselor Hanife strongly agrees with this opinion and offers, *"Students without adaptation problems can make the transition period easier for others. Newcomers are able to dive into school and dormitory life, as if they had studied in the school for years, following the steps of their peers. This is only possible when the students communicate with the new ones."* Counselor İsmail agrees, *"Kids from the same village can be more effective than us in the adaptation process. Their experiences feel closer to heart when they talk about their own adaptation period. I sometimes ask a student who had adaptation problems in the past to be there with me when I talk to a newcomer."* Counselor Ayşe believes that, *"Peer mentoring is very valuable. Children can notice a newcomer with adaptation problems because they themselves went through similar situations. And when they notice such a peer, they try help him/her. When the kids are younger than them, they see them as a*



*sibling and support them in school life. They talk about the fun activities they do in the dormitory and inform the newcomers about the possibilities that the future school life holds for them.*” In light of these findings, it is believed that the peer support system among students at school has a significant impact on resolving adaptation problems. This peer support plays an important role in explaining the school's rules and way of life to new students, guiding them, and making them feel like they are a part of the school. Therefore, school administration and counseling services can focus on promoting and strengthening this peer support system.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

This study explores students' adaptation problems in regional boarding schools based upon the perspectives and experiences of the employed school psychological counselors. The findings of the study illustrate that the participants agree on the themes of the causes for the adaptation problems of RBS students, noticing the adaptation problems, and solving them.

When all themes are considered, we concluded the most likely underlying reasons for adaptation problems of RBS students include: homesickness, family structure, getting used to the different practices at school, and envying other students. Students' adaptation problems are normally reported directly to the school counseling services or diagnosed indirectly by observations of mood swings, risky behaviors, somatic pains, frequency of making phone calls and absenteeism. The focus group discussion also presented common practices to reduce the number of adaptation problems experienced by the students. Key practices that were found common amongst the participants were that providing counseling and guidance services during and after working hours and having a collaborative relationship between the administration, teachers and counseling services assist in alleviating adaptation problems. Further, organizing activities to increase a sense of belongingness and peer support are also contributing factors. This study highlights the findings obtained through the perspectives and experiences of school psychological counselors to understand and address adaptation problems in regional boarding schools. The findings provide important insights into the causes, diagnosis, and solutions of adaptation problems, offering key factors that can assist schools in more effectively intervening with adaptation issues. Therefore, it is important for schools to consider these findings to better understand and resolve students' adaptation problems.

Findings reveal the most underlying reason that inhibits the students from fully integrating in the RBS is homesickness. It is believed to be one of the most important problems that RBS students experience; however, it is not the direct reason of adaptation problems (Mallon, 2013). Students at RBSs have to continue their education away from their families without seeing them for a long time. They struggle to adapt to the specific rules of the school; while as the same, experience homesickness (Charbonneau-Dahlen, 2010; Kashti, 1998). When the examples of boarding schools in different parts of the world are examined, it is seen that the difficulties brought by separation from the family are common for all children. Bobongie (2017) also conducted focus group and individual interviews with students who attended a regional boarding school where only female students were accepted, and those who studied at this school in the past. The research findings are in parallel with the findings of this study and showed that the girls who left their communities to continue their education in this boarding school experienced academic difficulties, had cultural problems in adapting to the rules of the school, and longed for family. Similarly to these research findings, in their study conducted by Mander and Lester (2023), they investigated homesickness symptoms and their dimensions, coping strategies, and their relationship with resilience, emotional, and mental health factors in 29 male adolescents aged 11-12 who were in their first year at boarding schools in Australia. They reported that one in five participants experienced recurring homesickness throughout the first year.

Differences in family structure, such as coming from a broken family and/or experiencing the loss of a parent also affects the adaptation period negatively (Demirel, 2013). Students who are sent off to a boarding school by their families may experience feelings of abandonment or not being loved enough (Robbins et al., 2006; Yeo, 2010). In a study that investigated the mental health of 299 participants aged 10-15 who continued their education in a boarding school, Xing et al., (2021) reported that staying in a boarding school increased parental alienation and negatively affected mental health. Moreover, the feeling of being left behind is another negative factor. Students who see their friends go home every weekend or are visited by their families on a regular basis make up a considerably large group. In contrast to this study, it is noteworthy that in the international literature,



the feelings of abandonment experienced by students in boarding schools have been predominantly discussed within the frameworks of cultural, political, and migration issues (Bass, 2013; Dawson, 2012; Wang et al., 2017). The theme labelled “Everything Is So Different” emerged due to the participants’ opinions concerning the students’ first year of boarding school. Students have to learn how to use facilities such as toilets and showers, handle different teacher attitudes, and overcome the drop in academic success during their first year. In a cross-sectional study conducted with 97 participants, similar to the results of this study, Rianti et al. (2019) found that personal hygiene practices were lacking in boarding schools and increased the incidence of infectious diseases.

School psychological counselors play a vital role in noticing students with adaptation problems (Balbernie, 2007). The majority of cases are referred to the counseling services indirectly, even though students are sometimes aware of their adaptation problems and seek help. Teachers and other students can apply to the counseling services when they notice a certain student is exhibiting mood swings or emotional outbursts and/or, as a result of these feelings, if they smoke, are continuously truant, and display risky behaviors. Risky behaviors can result in unexpected and unwanted personal, social and developmental situations (Jessor, 1998). In particular, risky behaviors of students at RBSs usually involve drug and alcohol abuse (Hicks, 1996; Robin et al., 2008), thoughts/attempts of suicide (Spero et al., 1989; Dinges and Duong, 1994), and depression (LaFromboise and Low, 1998). Riswan-Hadi (2021), in their research where they examined guidance and psychological counseling services based on the perspectives of counselors, administrators, and students, defined one of the most important roles of counselors as conducting individual or group activities to actively engage students in communicating, interacting, and socializing with their environments, in addition to intervening in risky behaviors.

Somatic pains and making frequent phone calls also help psychological counselors identify students with adaptation problems. There are some studies in the literature that reference the frequency of making phone calls of the students who live away from their families. Chen (2010), who researched Uyghur Turks who study at a boarding school, found that students continuously tried to reach their families by phone because they couldn’t go home for a long time due to severe geographical conditions.

School psychological counselors play a key role in resolving problems of adaptation experienced by the students. One contributing factor is that counselors organize group work in order to explain the school rules and to give information on hygiene and dormitory life. They also conduct therapeutic individual sessions in cases of emergency, both during and after working hours, which has led to a new responsibility called “teacher-counselor.” Atli (2018) found that school psychological counselors get to observe student behaviors both at school and in dormitory due to their teacher-counselor duties. Nevertheless, this often affects their relationship with the students negatively, as they have to undertake the authoritarian role. In addition, they emphasized that cooperation between the school and the teachers improves the effectiveness of the counseling services. Psychological counselors who participated in Atli’s study also underlined the importance of making this collaboration as part of the school culture in reducing the number of adaptation problems. Adaptation problems can be kept to a minimum when the school administration creates resources for socio-cultural and sport events and when the activities that are planned collaboratively at the beginning of the semester are actualized. It is expected that the students would feel a sense of belongingness more and more with each activity and thus have fewer adaptation problems. In one study that detailed the expectations of RBS students from the teachers and the counseling services, Güven and Kutlu (2001) found that the students had high expectations of the orientation programs. This shows us the key role of sense of belonging in solving adaptation problems. Similarly, in interviews with 16 students from 4 different boarding schools where only boys were accepted, Mander, Cohen, and Pooley (2015) found that despite the cultural difficulties of being Aboriginal, students took receiving education as an opportunity. Moreover, they concluded that the students had academic difficulties, were homesick and sought peer support. In their research, the importance of creating a positive school climate, planning activities that would increase the sense of belonging to the school, and pedagogical training of staff were also mentioned. Also, in their longitudinal study that examined a 12-month period

involving 7 students who started boarding school, Lester and Mandel (2020) concluded that orientation interventions conducted by the school were related to students' academic, emotional, and mental well-being.

Among the important findings of this study are the positive effects of counseling services that include peer support and orientation programs. While there are studies indicating that school psychologists working in boarding schools frequently use peer counseling to increase students' self-esteem or enhance their coping skills (Hidayah & Sahari-Nordin, 2020; Gao et. al., 2021; Susilawati et. al., 2022), no research has been found that employs a peer counseling program for intervening in adaptation problems. Nonetheless, Aladağ (2009), in his study analyzing the effects of peer counseling on improving the adaptation process of university students, revealed that peer counseling is a significant source of social support. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that peer counseling can minimize conflicts, and perceived social support can facilitate the adaptation process.

In light of all these results, this study provides significant insights through the perspectives and experiences of school psychological counselors in understanding and addressing adaptation problems in boarding schools. The findings offer key factors that can assist schools in more effectively intervening with the causes, diagnosis, and solutions of adaptation problems.

### Suggestions

Eight school psychological counselors who work at regional boarding schools in seven different regions of Türkiye participated in this study. Being limited with the experiences of these teachers decreases the generalizability of the study. Moreover, having only one focus group discussion can be counted as another limitation.

Further research can be carried out to describe how RBS students overcome being homesick and feeling abandoned. Qualitative research can be used to analyze the risky behaviors of RBS students in-depth. Psychoeducation programs aimed at the transition/orientation process of RBS students can be designed by benefiting from the findings of this research. Peer counseling can be integrated into the orientation programs at schools. The role conflict that the school psychological counselors have due to the teacher-counselor duties can be investigated from the student perspective. Ministry of National Education can prepare standardized activity calendars especially for the regional boarding schools. In-depth qualitative studies on family relations and education history can be carried out with the students with adaptation problems. Facilities at RBSs can be enhanced for the students to spend more quality time at school. In-depth studies on the attitudes of RBS teachers towards the students can be carried out. Similar studies can be done other RBSs across the country and the findings can be compared. Comparative studies aimed at the adaptation problems of the students from RBSs and other schools can be carried out.

**Author Contributions:** Dr. Canan Çitil Akyol is the lead author of this study and has conducted the research design, data collection process, and analysis. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kutlu has critically reviewed the article and contributed to the discussion and conclusion sections.

**Funding Disclosure:** The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** None of the authors declared any conflict of interest

**Data Availability:** Not applicable.

**Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate:** Inonu University Scientific Research and Ethics Committee, Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee Document Date and Number: 02/02/2022-E.140245

### References

- Aisyaroh, N., & Ediyono, S. (2023). A overview of adolescent mental health in boarding school. *Professional Health Journal*, 4(2), 372-379. <https://doi.org/10.54832/phj.v4i2.440>
- Aladağ, M. (2009). Evaluation of the peer helping program conducted for university adjustment. *Turkish Psychological Counselling and Guidance Journal*, 4(31),12-22.

- Atli, A. (2018). Experiences of school counselors working in district boarding schools. *International Journal of School & Psychology*, 6(2), 99-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2017.1285732>
- Balbernie, R. (2007). The move to intersubjectivity: A clinical and conceptual shift of perspective. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 33(3), 308-324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00754170701667213>
- Bass, L. R. (2013). Boarding schools and capital benefits: Implications for urban school reform. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 107(1), 16-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2012.753855>
- Baru, M. P., et al., (2020). Correlates of loneliness in single gender and coeducational boarding schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. *African Journal of Education, Science and Technology*, 6(1), 102- 112
- Başarır, İ. Ş., & Parman, T. (2009). *Yatılılık: Ev Okul Olunca* [Boarding: When Home Becomes Schools]. (1st Ed.). Bağlam.
- Bekar, G. (2006). Yatılı ve gündüzlü ilköğretim okulunda öğrenim gören kız adölesanların antropometrik ölçümleri, beslenme durumları, beslenme alışkanlıkları ve diyet örüntülerinin tespiti / The determination of antropometric measurements, the state of nutrition, the habit of nutrition and diet programmes of the girl who are educated in the day and boarding school [The Determination of Antropometric Measurements, the State of Nutrition, the Habit of Nutrition and Diet Programmes of the Girl Who are Educated in the Day and Boarding school]. (Publication No: 215413) [Master thesis, Gazi University]. National Thesis Centre.
- Bobongie, F. (2017). Ngoelmun Yawar, Our Journey: The transition and the challenges for female students leaving torres strait island communities for boarding schools in Regional Queensland. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 46(2), 127-136. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2017.5>
- Boydak-Özan, M., Sağlam, H., & Karaca, H. (2012). Board Problems in Management in Regional Boarding Primary Schools. *Fırat University Social Sciences Journal*, 22(2), 126-138.
- Charbonneau-Dahlen, B.K. (2010). *Giving Voice to historical trauma through storytelling: The impact of boarding school experience on American Indians* [Doctoral thesis, Florida Atlantic University]. Florida Atlantic University Libraries.
- Chen, Y. (2010). Crossing the frontier to Inland China: Family Social Capital for Minority Uighur Students in Chinese Boarding Schools. *Chinese Education and Society*, 43(1), 46-57. <https://doi.org/10.2753/CED1061-1932430104>
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Fourth Edition). SAGE Publication, Inc.
- Çetin, Ç. (2013). Yatılı ilköğretim bölge okullarında yönetim sorunları ve bir uygulama [Administration Problems at Boarding Schools and an Application]. (Publication No: 349096) [Master thesis, Gazi University]. National Thesis Centre.
- Çetinkaya, M., & Gelişli, Y. (2014). Regional primary boarding school students about regional primary boarding school function. *Gazi University Arts Education Journal*, 33, 1-8.
- Çetintürk, H. (2001). *Yatılı İlköğretim Okulu 2. Kademe Öğrencilerinin Depresyon ve Umutsuzluk Düzeyleri Açısından Karşılaştırılması* [Comparison of Students Studying in the Second Grade of Secondary School and Boarding Secondary School in Term of Hopelessness and Depression]. [Master thesis, Atatürk University]. Atatürk University Libraries.
- Çokamay, G., Çavdar, D., & Çok, F. (2014). Students' developmental needs and life conditions in regional boarding schools: An investigation based on teachers' views. *Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences*, 47 (1), 19-42.
- Dawson, A. S. (2012). Histories and memories of the Indian boarding schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. *Latin American Perspectives*, 39(5), 80-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X12447274>
- Demirel, N. (2013). *Yatılı ilköğretim bölge okullarının sorunları ve çözümlerine ilişkin yöneticilerin, öğretmenlerin, öğrencilerin ve velilerin görüşleri: Bir durum çalışması* [The Views of Administrators, Teachers, Students and Parents About the Problems and Solutions of the Regional Primary Boarding Schools: A Case Study]. [Master thesis, Akdeniz University]. Akdeniz University Libraries.

- Dinges, N., & Duong, Q. (1994). Suicide ideation and suicide attempt among American Indian and Alaska Native Boarding School adolescents. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 4, 167-188.
- Doğan, S. (1996). The development of professional identity in psychological counseling and guidance field in Turkey and related problems. *Turkish Psychological Counselling and Guidance Journal*, 2(7), 32-44.
- Eraslan, L. (2006, 24 January). Yalnızlığın Okulları YİBO'lar [The Schools of Loneliness are RBS]. Retrieved from <http://www.memurlar.net/haber/38102/>
- Nigar, F. (2014). *Ortaokul öğrencileri ile yatılı bölge ortaokul öğrencilerinin öznel iyi oluş ve temel psikolojik ihtiyaçlar düzeyinin karşılaştırması [Comparison with Secondary School Students Boarding Secondary School Students' Subjective Well-Being and Basic Psychological Needs Level]*. (Master thesis, Gaziosmanpaşa University). Gaziosmanpaşa University Libraries. <https://acikbilim.yok.gov.tr/handle/20.500.12812/617336>
- Gander, J. M., & Gardiner, W. H. (2010). Çocuk ve Ergen Gelişimi [Child and Adolescent Development]. (6th Ed.). İmge.
- Gao, J. L. et al, (2021). The promotive effects of peer support and active coping in relation to negative life events and depression in Chinese adolescents at boarding schools. *Current Psychology*, 40, 2251-2260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-0143-5>
- Güven, M. & Kutlu, M. (2001). Yatılı ilköğretim bölge okulu öğrencilerinin öğretmenlerden bekledikleri ve gözdedikleri rehberlik davranışları [School in a Child's Life, School Readiness, Key Factors Affecting Readiness, and Dimensions of Readiness for Primary School]. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi*, 27 (27), 325-334.
- Hicks, D. (1996). The strange fate of the American boarding school. *The American Scholar*, 65(4), 523-535.
- Hidayah, N., & Sahari-Nordin, M. (2020). Perceived peer support, autonomy and self-esteem among boarding school students. *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 235-240. <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v3i1.2485>
- Hopkins, E., McPherson, S., & Cavenagh, P. (2023). British Boarding Schools, Mental Health and Resilience. Cavenagh, P., McPherson, S., & Ogden, P. (Ed.), *The Psychological Impact of Boarding School: The Trunk in the Hall* (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.) Routledge.
- İnal, U., & Sadık, F. (2014). The views of teachers and students relating to elementary boarding district schools' quality of school life. *Çukurova University Faculty of Education Journal*, 43(2), 169-194. <https://doi.org/10.14812/cufej.2014.019>
- Jessor, R. (1998). *New Perspectives on Adolescence Risk Behavior* (Ed). Cambridge Press.
- Kahraman, H. (2009). *Yatılı ilköğretim bölge okulu (YİBO) ve normal okullara devam eden ergenlerde mizah duygusu ile benlik algısı arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi [The Study on the Relationship Between Sense of Humour and the Perception of Individualism on Adolescents in Boarding Schools (YİBO) and Normal Schools]* [Master thesis, Selçuk University]. Selçuk University Libraries. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/6930>
- Kashti, Y. (1998). *Boarding Schools at the Crossroads of Change: The Influence of Residential Educational Institutions on National and Societal Development*. Haworth.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The Methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 16(1), 103-121.
- Köksal-Akyol, A. & Salı, G. (2013). Examination of self-concept and the perception of social support of boarding and say students. *Kastamonu Education Journal*, 21(4), 1377-1398.
- LaFromboise, T. D., & Low, K. G. (1998). American Indian Children and Adolescents. In J. T. Gibbs & L. N. Huang (Eds.), *Children of color: Psychological interventions with culturally diverse youth* (pp. 112-142). Jossey-Bass.
- Langham, E., et al. (2018). Validation and factor analysis of child and youth resilience measure for Indigenous Australian boarding school students. *Frontiers Public Health*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2018.00299>
- Lester, L., & Mander, D. (2020). A longitudinal mental health and wellbeing survey of students transitioning to a boys' only boarding school. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 30(2), 67-83.

- Liu, M., & Villa, K. M. (2020). Solution or isolation: Is boarding school a good solution for left-behind children in rural China? *China Economic Review*, 61(2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2020.101456>
- Mallon, M.R. (2013). *Male Chinese Student Transitions to Life in an American Secondary Catholic Boarding School*. (Publication No: 228) [Doctoral dissertation, Loyola Marymount University]. Loyola Marymount University Libraries. <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd/228>
- Mander, D. J., & Lester, L. (2023). Self-Reported homesickness in Australian adolescent males during their first year at boarding school: An exploratory study of symptomatic features, its dimensionality, coping strategies, and the relationship with academic, resilience, emotional and mental wellbeing factors. *Educational and Development Psychologist*, 40(2), 299-310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20590776.2023.2210762>
- Mander, D., J., Cohen, L., & Pooley, J., A. (2015). A critical exploration of staff perceptions of aboriginal boarding students' experiences. *Australian Journal of Education*, 59(3), 312-328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research Guide to Design and Implementation* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (2016). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği (2003, 23 08). Resmi Gazete (Sayı: 25212). Retrieved From: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2003/08/20030827.htm>.
- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği (2012, 21 07). Resmi Gazete (Sayı: 28360). Retrieved From: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/07/20120721-9.htm>.
- Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Rehberlik Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği (2017, 10 05). Resmi Gazete (Sayı: 30236). Retrieved From: <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2017/11/20171110-2.htm>.
- Noll, M., et al., (2020). Health- risk behaviour differences between boarding and non-resident students: Brazilian adolescent national school health survey. *Archive of Public Health*, 78(8). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13690-020-0392-7>
- Oktay, A. (2018). Çocuğun Yaşamında Okul, Okula Hazırbulunuşluk, Hazırbulunuşluğu Etkileyen Temel Faktörler ve İlkokula Hazırlığın Boyutları [School in a Child's Life, School Readiness, Key Factors Affecting Readiness, and Dimensions of Readiness for Primary School ]. Pegem Akademi.
- Özcan, F. (2009). *Yatılı ve Gündüzlü İlköğretim 2. Kademe Öğrencilerinin Beslenme Alışkanlıkları ve Besin Tercihlerinin Saptanması [Determination of nutritional habits and food preferences of boarding and daytime primary school 2nd level students]*. [Master thesis, Selçuk University]. Selçuk University Libraries. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/9113>
- Öztürk, M., Hilton, A., & Jongerden, J. (2014). Some recent developments in rural living structures in Turkey. *Population, Space and Place*, 20(4), 370-388. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1828>
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation methods* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Pavletic, A. C., et al., (2016). Health services in boarding school: An oasis of care, counseling, and comfort. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 32(5), 304-314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840516649234>
- Redman-MacLaren, M. L., et al., (2017). Measuring resilience and risk factors for the psychosocial well-being of aboriginal and torres strait islander boarding school students: Pilot baseline study results. *Frontiers Education*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2017.00005>
- Rianti, E., et al., (2019). Enchancing health quality of Islamic boarding school students through hygiene practices in Depok and Banten, Indonesia. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.5958/0973-9130.2019.00545.0>
- Riswan-Hadi, A. T. R. (2021). Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Program in Madrasah Aliyah Islamic Boarding School Darul Ulum Asahan. *International Journal of Education, Social Studies, and Management*, 1(2), 14-28. <https://doi.org/10.52121/ijessm.v1i2.28>
- Robbins, R.R., Colmant, S.A., Dorton, J., Schultz, L., Colmant, Y., & Ciali, P. (2006). Colonial Instillations in American Indian Boarding School Students. *Educational Foundations*, 20, 69-88.



- Robin, R.W., Rasmussen, J.K., & Gonzalez-Santin, E. (2008). Impact of childhood out of home placement on a Southwestern American Indian Tribe. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 2(1), 2, 69-89. <https://doi.org/10.1300/J137v02n01-06>
- Rudrum, M. (2020). *Loneliness and Mental Health Among Adolescent Females in Boarding Schools*. Education of the University of Western Australia.
- Smits, J., & Gündüz-Hoşgör, A. (2006). Effects of family background characteristics on educational participation in Turkey. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(2006), 545-560. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.02.002>
- Sönmez, M. (2000). *Yatılı ilköğretim bölge okullarının varlığının velilerin çocuklarını okula göndermeleri üzerinde etkisi [The Effect of the Presence of Regional Boarding Primary Schools on Parents' Sending Their Children to School]*. [Master thesis, Uludağ University] Uludağ University Libraries. <http://hdl.handle.net/11452/7214>
- Spero M., Manson, S., M., Beals, J., Dick, R., W., & Duclos, C. (1989). Risk factors for suicide among Indian adolescents at a boarding school. *Public Health Reports, November-December*, 104(6), 609- 614.
- Sri Wahyuni, N., & Barus, N. (2020). The adaptation differences in terms of gender on students in Ulumul Qur'an Stabat Islamic boarding school. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal*, 3(1), 417-427. <https://doi.org/10.33258/birci.v3i1.787>
- Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P.N. (1990). *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. SAGE.
- Su, A., He, W., & Huang, T. (2019). Sociocultural adaptation profiles of ethnic minority senior high school students in Mainland China: A latent class analysis. *Sustainability*, 11, 6942. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11246942>
- Susilawati, S. et al., (2022). Formation and training of peer counselors on PKPR and post-covid-19 AKB socialization. *AbdimasMu UMTAS: Journal of Community Service*, 36(5).
- Şenol, D., & Yıldız, S. (2009). Student-teacher and family interaction in the boarding primary teaching regional schools-the cases of Diyarbakır and Erzurum. *Çukurova University Social Sciences Journal*, 18(1), 359-376.
- Ulutaş, A., & Yayan, E. H. (2017). Effects of Drama-Based Supportive Training Programs on Social Self-Efficacy of Children in Regional Boarding Secondary School. *Inönü University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 18(1), 176-187. <https://doi.org/10.17679/inuefd.306511>
- Uysal, İ. (2016). *Pansiyonlu Okullardaki Öğrencilerin Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar ve Başarılarına Etkisi [Problems faced by students in boarding schools and their effects on their success]*. [Master thesis, Pamukkale University]. Pamukkale University Libraries. <https://hdl.handle.net/11499/861>
- Wang, S., Dong, X., & M., Y. (2017). The impact of boarding on campus on the social-emotional competence of left-behind children in Rural Western China. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 18, 413-423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-017-9476-7>
- Xing, J., Leng, L., & Ho, R. T. H. (2021). Boarding school attendance and mental health among Chinese adolescents: The potential role of alienation from parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 127(2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106074>
- Yalın A., Levent, B., Eroğlu, Ç. Y., Cerrah, N., & Sundur, Y.T. (2004). *Haydi Kızlar Okula [Let's Go Girls Schools]*. MEB.
- Yeo, W. (2010). Belonging to "Chinatown": A study of Asian boarders in a West Australian private boarding School. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 20(1), 55-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620211003655655>
- Yıldız, M., & Kula-Şanlı, K. (2012). Researching the reasons of students' absenteeism in regional boarding primary schools. *Çukurova University Social Sciences Journal*, 21(3), 433-466.