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## The problems faced by university students and proposals for solution

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### Abstract

The present study, which is going to be held in the light of earlier researches, is intended to investigate into problems university students face. The study aims to determine the views of students enrolled in Uludag University with respect to their problems about accommodation and nutrition, adaptation and orientation, anxiety about future and unemployment, qualified education. For the purpose of the study, the data is to be collected with the help of a questionnaire and a personal information form prepared after having reviewed the related literature. The sample of the study is to include randomly selected 320 students studying Uludag University during the 2011-2012 educational year. In the study, the students' points of view about problems are investigated according to the variables of faculty and gender. In line with the findings obtained, the perspectives of students selected from both faculties with regard to problems they deal with during their university education are to be compared. The resulting data is to be analyzed by using the SPSS 13.0 program.

Keywords: University, university students, problems of university students.

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### 1. Introduction

University is a concept having come down to us from Ancient Greece. The concept of “universitas” constituted through being inspired by the environment where Plato and Aristotle created philosophical discussions with their students without feeling any political and religious pressures is named as university (Ortas, 2004). Universities as the highest educational and research institutions have been serving humanity at universal scale as centers where every kind of material and spiritual problems are scrutinized and investigated at the highest level and obtained findings are transferred again through teaching and publication (Ortas, 2002). At the same time, universities, also with the mission which they undertake to reach information directly, have an important place in the dimension of transferring information. The main functions which universities are supposed to carry out have been listed as follows: 1. Carrying out scientific research studies, 2. Producing solutions to the problems of humanity and a country, 3. Training the human force which a country needs, 4. Teaching information, skills, emotions and intuitions which they obtain to other people, making publications, 5. Setting examples in every area (Sonmez, 2003). However, today, three main functions of universities are mentioned. These are instruction, research and public service (HEC, 2006). Individuals having completed certain stages of education successfully continue higher education institutions with the aim of benefiting from these missions of universities. However, the period of time spent in higher education is “youth”, with its simplest definition, a certain and limited age segment preparing an individual emotionally, intellectually and behaviorally for social maturity (Koknel, 1982). Especially for developing countries, the young population with their dynamism and trainability carry an exceptional importance. According to

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the 2010 statistics, in our country, the population interval also covering university students (ages of 16-24) amounts to 12, 5 million and this population constitutes approximately 10% of the total population. The preparation of young people being able to participate consciously in decisions about themselves and the society for the future and the organization of their economic, cultural and psychological developments in addition to physical development healthily are possible through using limited resources most effectively (Aytaç, 1993). In this context, the way of highest quality passes through education.

## **1.2. Problems of University Youth**

Today the number of students continuing higher education is on the rapid increase, science and technology are advancing more rapidly with every passing day, and life conditions are changing. However, in studies made, it has been found that young people do not feel confidence in higher education due to such reasons as a great majority of young people's not being able to find what they expect at universities, the insufficiency of education they take at universities for finding a job, and psychological and general problems. Today university youth cannot graduate by getting benefited from university education sufficiently and plan their future orientations and goals. For this reason, since they result from the social, cultural and economic environment and social structure, they are multidimensional and different. This situation drives the young to indecisiveness and depression (Aytaç, 1993). In order to be able to understand reasons underlying this distrust and propose solutions to them, it is necessary to throw light on the situation which young people is in and their problems. Helping university youth with discovering their personalities, sharing responsibilities, developing their activities and relationships in social life, and offering consistent, permanent and multidimensional services to meet their desires and needs are possible greatly through the identification of existing situations and problems. However, solutions to be proposed should have an appropriate, reasonable approach to both the conditions of Turkey and those of universities because this is the only way to produce practical solutions and take firm steps for the future (Aytaç, 1993). Determining problems that university students face clearly and concretely moving from their own individual evaluations will present important feedback in the development of programs and services directed at young people (Lucas, 1993 cited by Gizir, 2005). In our country, a number of studies have been carried out on university students' problems and various results have been obtained with respect to the matter (Ozguven, 1992; Aytaç 1993; Nemutlu, 1997; Kaygusuz, 2002; Gizir, 2005). Moving from these studies, it is possible to gather the problems faced by university youth today under 4 main categories. These are food and accommodation, habituation and orientation, worries about future and profession and quality education.

### *1.2.1. Problems related to Food and Accommodation*

Feeding is necessary for every living thing to survive. Feeding is taking and using nutrients which are to provide each of energy and nutrients, which are necessary to grow, develop and lead a long, healthy and efficient life, most economically and sufficiently before they lose their nutrition values and become unhealthy. Insufficiently taking any of these nutritional elements or not taking any affects growth and development negatively. In every stage of life, being healthy physically and mentally and maintaining health are possible through adequate and balanced nutrition (Tanır et al., 2001).

As stated before, too, university students are individuals being in the period of "youth", and in this very period, in which they move into adulthood, it is particularly important to acquire and develop a healthy life style and eating habits. Problems related to obesity, the habit of malnutrition, are a source of worry for some students and their parents (Yuping, 2005). It is known that chronic disorders, which might appear in advancing times, can be treated through healthy nutrition. However, studies made indicate that young people in this period are at risk of developing chronic disorders, which might appear in advancing time due to inadequate nutrition. It has been observed that students can allocate a budget of 50 to 100 TLs per week, they decrease the number of meals in a day to economize, and nutrients which they consume are cheap but unhealthy nutrients such as rolls, sandwiches, and macaroni. It is known that students can not consume some nutrients of high value (meat, dairy products, some fruits and vegetables) due to their being economically coercive. The findings obtained in a study carried out in 2007 on 180 students studying at Balıkesir University Bandırma Health Vocational School Nursing and Bandırma Vocational School Child Development departments listed the reasons why students skip meals as follows: 1- Being unable to wake up in the morning, 2- Time restriction, 3- Absence of someone preparing, 4-Being on a diet, 5- Lack of appetite, 6- Insufficiency of economic possibilities. Another problem faced with respect to nutrition is dormitory

conditions. In studies made (Gulec et al., 2008; Garibagaoglu et al., 2006), it was observed that students staying in dormitories could not take adequate nourishment due to bad conditions in dormitories, lack of environments to enable them feed in any way they like (kitchen, fridge) and most of them ate just to be full up.

Yet another important problem affecting students' achievements is the problem of accommodation. Accommodation is the first problem encountered by students leaving their cities and moving to another city to get higher education. A great majority of university youth are left no choice but to leave their families to get education. However, in recent years, due to the increase observed in the number of universities and in the student quotas, yet not parallel to this, student dormitories' having fallen short of meeting needs make the problem of accommodation more serious for university students (Kaya et al., 2005).

### *1.2.2. Problem of Habituation and Orientation*

Adjustment is related to an individual's ability to establish healthy relationships with him/herself and his/her surrounding and maintain these relationships (Ozguven, 1992). In the early days of the university period when students leave their homes and lives which they have been leading and start a different life, students undergo a process what we call "adjustment". During this process, to be able to help them, it is important and necessary to provide them with habituation and orientation (adjustment training) services included among the psychological and guidance services. Habituation and orientation services will help students newly starting university to adjust to this new environment and conditions in their lives, and to overcome difficulties which they might face. These services will contribute to their getting information about possibilities and services provided by universities and also about universities' principles and rules. At the same time, these are services included among the psychological counseling and guidance provided with the aim of helping students to get pieces of information necessary for making rational and correct decisions during university life, and to get to know about a university's campuses, departments, dormitories, close surrounding and cities where they are. It is not possible to state that university students, who encounter many different problems such as the problem of adjustment to environment, depression, concern for the future, problems related to education, problems lived in bilateral relations, and problems related to nutrition, can get professional support which they need to solve these problems. It is psychological counseling and guidance centers and counselors that play an active role in the administration of psychological counseling and guidance services which are to help university students to solve these problems (Kutlu, 2004).

It was aimed to establish guidance and counseling centers linked to Medico-Social, Health, Culture and Sport Directorates in a way to cover student personal services and psychological counseling and guidance services specified in the modified 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> articles of 2880 numbered law in accordance with the modification made in 2547 numbered Higher Education Law (T.R. Official Gazette, 3 February 1984, Number: 18301). However, unfortunately, these services cannot be provided sufficiently by most of the universities in our country.

### *1.2.3. Unemployment and Worry about the Future*

The problem of unemployment lived in our country has become an important matter due to the fact that especially university graduate people have an important place which cannot be regarded as too little at all. Getting a good job is an important problem waiting for especially newly-graduated young people. About the matter of finding a solution to this problem, young people rely on their close surrounding and education they get. However, the saddening thing is that these young people are worried about the thought that diplomas they get will be of no use in today's social conditions (Aytac, 1993). In young people, who have come to the last year of university and are supposed to begin to make a living by choosing a job to get an income to continue their lives a short while later and do not plan characteristics they look for in a job which they will work in beforehand, indecisiveness and, as a natural result of this, hopelessness, instability and worry about the job are observed at a high level (Aytac and Bayram, 2001). Unfortunately, students' finding jobs with only university diplomas is rather difficult today. If parallelism is not established between universities graduated and domestic employment conditions, one of these two areas naturally precedes the other and sabotages university which we can express as an investment for the future, and universities can never become places training workforce (Kocanci, 2002). The problem of unemployment is not only a general problem for a country, but also it is a problem paving the way for material and spiritual losses for people. Young people having difficulties with respect to the matter of finding a job following their education get weary in

siritual point of view, but those who cannot find a job for a long time might live serious psychological problems (Aytac, 1993).

#### *1.2.4. Problem of Quality Education*

Quality education is the training of today's youth by setting up necessary physiological and sociological conditions and considering the needs and conditions of the future. While mentioning about the problem of quality education, it is possible to mention about such matters as qualified educators, qualified students, physical conditions of universities (access to information, crowded classrooms, social possibilities) (Ortas, 2002).

When universities are evaluated according to functions they perform, they fall into two categories: (1) "research universities" and (2) "mass education universities". Research universities were established basically to perform the function of research. At these universities, while the number of students is low, that of educators having degrees is high. Short-term vocational and technical higher education institutions and universities giving education to large masses have met the student demand increasing with the popularization of the higher education after the World War (Guruz 2001). When this definition is taken into consideration, it is possible to state that the present universities have inclined away from the definition of research universities and changed into mass education universities. Today with the increase in the number of students continuing higher education, the populations of universities have become crowded and present physical conditions have fallen short of meeting the demand. For this reason, a great majority of educators lecturing at universities try to catch up with their intensive course loads instead of making research studies on their fields and becoming specialized. In a study made (Kaya et al., 2007), the teaching staff servicing at Ataturk University Kazım Karabekir Education Faculty were asked to express their opinions about the characteristics of the students they taught. In the end of the study, it was observed that the teaching staff did not regard their students as competent enough with respect to matters such as searching, preparing for classes, expressing opinions about lessons without hesitating, not being satisfied with given resources and resorting to other resources, following out-of-field publications, and coming to classes with various supplementary resources.

Physical conditions of universities are among the factors affecting quality education as well. To be able to produce information and carry out research studies, there is a need for preliminary information, and therefore sources of information, and institutions to be able to put these sources into service in an efficient way (Celik, 1991). In this respect, university libraries have a role much more important than that of other units on research activities. University libraries should have every kind of update printed or electronic resources to meet all information needs of academic units (Odabas and Polat, 2011).

An other problem is that universities do not have sufficient physical structures with respect to foreign language education. In order to develop four basic skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) in language education and to get them acquired effectively, using visual and auditory elements is important. However, the technological possibilities of faculties are limited in this respect. Moreover, crowded classrooms are another problem lived. A great many of teachers would like to teach in classes composed of students who are close to one another in terms of competence level. However, with the exception of several of them who can be counted as lucky, they teach in classes composed of fifty or more students with different competence levels (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

In addition to these, crowded classrooms, physically insufficient buildings, absence of special classrooms (laboratory, language classrooms, lecture room), and absence of facilities necessary for carrying out social activities (gym, swimming pool, various fields) are listed as factors affecting education as well.

## **2. Research**

### *Method*

A questionnaire prepared by making a literature review was administered to 320 fourth year students enrolled in different departments of Education Faculty and Engineering and Architecture Faculty of Uludag University between the dates of 01.10.2011-01.11.2011 in the 2011–2012 academic year to investigate into problems that university youth are faced with. In the study, the students' points of view about problems are investigated according to the variables of faculty and gender. 160 students from each faculty were selected randomly. From Education Faculty, 107 female, 53 male; from Engineering and Architecture Faculty, 44 female, 116 male students participated in the study. In this context, of the selected students, 47% ( $f=151$ ) were female, 53% ( $f=169$ ) were male students. When looked at the income levels of the students, the following figures were observed: 100-200 TL 17 students (5,31%),

201-300 TL 85 students (26,56%), 301-400 TL 66 students (20,62%), 401-500 TL 57 students (17,81%), 501-600 TL 27 students (8,44%), 601-700 TL 26 students (8,13%), 701 TL and over 42 students (13,13%). During the questionnaire, the students were addressed a total of 17 questions, and they were asked to give answers in “yes-no”. The questions asked in the questionnaire form were addressed under 4 main headings in accordance with the purpose of the study, and the results were interpreted in percentage values by using SPSS 13.0 data analysis program.

### 3. Findings

**Table 1- Findings Related to Students’ Opinions about Their Nutrition Habits**

Nutrition Habits	Education Faculty				Engineering and Architecture Faculty			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Do you believe that you take your nourishment healthily?	49	58	30	23	19	25	55	61
	45,79	54,21	56,60	43,40	43,18	56,82	47,41	52,59
Have you lived any weight problems after starting university?	44	63	18	35	17	27	45	71
	41,12	58,88	33,96	66,03	38,64	61,36	38,79	61,21
Do you skip any meal within a day?	87	20	40	13	35	9	78	38
	81,30	18,70	75,47	24,53	79,55	20,45	67,24	32,76

The data related to the students’ nutrition habits is given in Table 1. It is observed that the male students enrolled in Education Faculty have higher perceptions with respect to the habit of healthy nutrition compared to the other groups. That the students after starting university do not live a weight problem at a serious rate is another data obtained as well. However, in the results obtained with respect to the meal skip within a day, it is observed at a high rate (75, 89%) that they skip meals.

**Table 2- Findings Related to Students’ Opinions about Their Nutrition Habits**

Food and Accommodation Conditions	Education Faculty				Engineering and Architecture Faculty			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Which of the following meals can you attach sufficient importance?								
Breakfast	31	28,97	12	22,64	14	31,81	23	19,82
Lunch	9	8,41	4	7,54	4	9,09	15	12,93
Dinner	40	37,38	22	41,50	20	45,45	54	46,55
All	27	25,23	15	28,30	6	13,63	24	20,68
At which of the following places do you eat meals most?								
Home	59	55,14	41	77,36	24	54,54	82	70,69
School / Dining Hall	28	26,17	8	15,10	9	20,45	7	6,03
Restaurant/Cafe/ Patisserie	20	18,69	4	7,54	11	25	27	23,27
Where do you reside ?								
With my family	35	32,71	13	24,53	21	47,73	45	38,79
House	31	28,97	30	56,60	10	22,72	47	40,52
Dormitory / Hostel	41	38,32	10	18,87	13	29,55	24	20,69

In the table indicating the students’ nutrition and accommodation states, it is observed that for all the groups the most important meal is dinner. The percentage of those who think that they do not skip any meals does not exceed 21, 96% and these results show parallelism with the answers given to the question ‘Do you skip any meals within a day?’ included in Table 2 (24,11%). That the students prefer to eat at home, and do not like to eat at places other than home is another finding obtained. That a great majority of the students (35, 62%) stay with their families or in flats rented might have an effect on these results. Within the scope of places preferred for eating meals, the male students of both faculties, with the rates of 77, 36% and 70, 69%, stated that they preferred to eat at home. And this caught attention as a higher preference rate (55, 14%, 54, 54%) when compared to the preference rates of the female

students. On the other hand, the female students prefer to eat their meals both at school and cafeteria (26, 17%, 20, 45%) more compared to the male students (15, 10%, 6, 03%).

**Table 3- Findings Related to Students’ Opinions about Habituation and Orientation**

Habituation and Orientation	Education Faculty				Engineering and Architecture Faculty			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	f %		f %		f %		f %	
Do you have enough information about different units of your school?	44 41,12	63 58,88	21 39,62	32 60,38	18 40,91	26 59,09	43 37,07	73 62,93
Do you know about the person or the people to help you to solve a problem related to your school?	42 39,25	65 60,75	23 43,40	30 56,60	17 38,64	27 61,36	44 37,93	72 62,07
Can you get any help about counseling?	27 25,23	80 74,77	15 28,30	38 71,70	14 31,82	30 68,18	23 19,83	93 80,17

That the students gave negative answers to the questions related to habituation and orientation services is eye-catching. That the students find the information they have about different units of the school insufficient can be seen in the answers given to this question with the rate of 60, 32% for both the female and the male students responding ‘no’. Likewise, it is observed that a great proportion of the students from both faculties are not aware of the people to give them help with finding solutions to problems, which they are faced with related to school. Related to getting help with respect to the counseling service, with the answer ‘no’ at the rates of 74, 77%, 71, 70%, 68, 18%, and 80, 17%, negative answers with an average rate of 73, 70% were encountered, and it was found that, in general, the students face difficulties.

**Table 4– Findings Related to Students’ Opinions about Unemployment and Worry about the Future**

Unemployment and Worry About the Future	Education Faculty				Engineering and Architecture Faculty			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	f %		f %		f %		f %	
Do you live worries of unemployment and about the future?	78 72,90	29 27,10	34 64,15	19 35,85	36 81,82	8 18,18	64 55,17	52 44,83
Do you think you are very likely to find a job after finishing your department?	61 57	46 43	28 52,83	25 47,17	21 47,73	23 52,27	81 69,83	35 30,17
Do you think you will find a job appropriate for your department?	92 85,98	15 14,02	41 77,36	12 22,64	25 56,82	19 43,18	96 82,76	20 17,24
Do you think that only the education you take at university will be enough for finding a job?	46 43	61 57	22 41,51	31 58,49	17 38,64	27 61,36	39 33,62	77 66,38
Do you think you will be satisfied with the job you will do related to your department?	100 93,46	7 6,54	46 86,79	7 13,21	39 88,64	5 11,36	98 84,48	18 15,52

When the students’ opinions about unemployment and worry about the future are examined, it is observed that the rates of the female students from both faculties having this worry were higher (72, 90%, 81, 82%) when compared to the male students (64, 15%, 55,17%). In all the groups, the female students studying at the Engineering and Architecture Faculty responded ‘yes’ at a lower rate (56, 82%) when compared to the others with respect to the matter of finding a job in accordance with the department which they studied. A total of 39, 19% of the students thought that the education they took at the university alone was enough to find a job. It is observed that 87, 81% of the students think that they will be satisfied with their future job related to their department.

**Table 5– Findings Related to Students’ Opinions about Quality Education**

Quality of Education	Education Faculty				Engineering and Architecture Faculty			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	f %		f %		f %		f %	
Do you find information access possibilities of your university sufficient enough?	43 40,19	64 59,81	21 39,62	32 60,38	15 34,09	29 65,91	43 37,07	73 62,93
Do you think the educators teaching you are competent enough in their fields?	57 53,27	50 46,73	26 50,95	27 49,05	30 68,18	14 31,82	87 75	29 25

The students having evaluated the information access possibilities of the university, at which they were taking education, responded ‘no’ with a rate of 62, 26%. When the students were asked to evaluate the competencies of the educators teaching them, differences were observed between the students of both faculties, and while the students of the Engineering and Architecture Faculty were found to be satisfied at a rate of 71, 59%, this situation remained at the level of 52, 11% for the students of Education Faculty.

#### 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

As seen in the study, too, the female students prefer dormitories more as an accommodation. A great many of the students included in the sample group think that they do not have a healthy nutrition regime. Some precautions should be taken to solve nutrition problems affecting students’ health, and therefore school success (Yılmaz and Ozkan, 2007). These measures might be: 1- Improvement of nutrition possibilities in places where students live, 2- Developing students’ habit of eating sufficient amount of food three times a day by organizing various education programs to make students conscious of nutrition, 3- When the fact that 208 of a total of 320 students (65%) have an income level of average 200-500 TL is considered, preparing sufficient and balanced menus at low price for students at dormitories, 4- At university cafeteria, students might be provided with breakfast and dinner alternatives.

From the findings obtained from the study, it appeared that the students felt a need for getting counseling help. These findings show parallelism with those obtained from the study made by Koser and Mercanlioglu (2010) investigating into problems related to academic counseling services. Providing habituation and orientation services in a planned manner is one of the factors to affect the quality of education given at our universities. In this context, as Kutlu (2004) stated in his study, before the academic year starts, the ‘orientation week’ should be organized, as made in some of our universities too, for students to get to know more closely about university and university campus. In addition to this, the psychological counseling and guidance services of universities should include within their bodies the elements having professional competence in order to reach the aims expected from them and provide students newly-coming to university with information about close environment and the city where they will live.

The reason why the students did not find the quality of education they took at an expected level despite the cultural and social shortcomings they were faced with might be that they regarded the education they took as limited to activities provided only in the classroom environment. The following measures might be taken to solve the quality problems in university education: 1- The academic qualifications of educators in universities should be increased by providing appropriate environments and should be encouraged to make studies, 2- Students starting higher education should be informed during their university lives about some skills which might help them (searching, reviewing resources, being able to use school library in an effective way) and, related to this, when necessary, should be provided with compulsory courses, 3- Solutions should be produced to decrease crowded student populations in universities, 4- The physical conditions of universities should be improved in a way to meet the present needs.

It can be concluded that 68, 51% of the student group participating in the study live the worries of unemployment and the future. In terms of the requirements by the job which they will do in the future, it is observed more than half of the students are not sure about if the education they take at university will be sufficient in their working lives. To solve this problem, it is necessary to determine the need for workforce correctly and guide students to department needed, rearrange education they take at universities in accordance with qualifications

needed in working life, include more applied courses, and increase and maintain the cooperation between industry and National Education.

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