DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

**CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF TURKISH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
IN HUNGARY, GERMANY, AND THE UNITED STATES**

BY

SEDA ERTURK

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Doctoral School of Psychology
Head of the doctoral school: Dr. Róbert Urbán. Eötvös Loránd University

Socialization and Social Processes
Head of the doctoral program: Dr. Lan Anh Nguyen Luu. Eötvös Loránd University

Supervisor:
Dr. Lan Anh Nguyen Luu. Eötvös Loránd University

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ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural adaptation is a process that can varies according to the host culture in which international students study. With that in mind, this dissertation examined and compared the adaptation experiences of Turkish international students (TIS) who have the same cultural background but study in three different cultures. A total of three studies were conducted for this purpose. The first study using the consensual qualitative research method (Hill, 2015) focused on the adaptation process of TIS at different German universities. As the first research on how TIS sojourning in Germany for educational purposes experience cross-cultural adaptation, this study focuses on their adaptation experience in Germany, taking into account the cultural and educational backgrounds of TIS. The study's findings showed the impact of disparaging stereotypes and discrimination aimed at a large community of immigrants from the same country. Also highlighted were the sharply different experiences of TIS in the safe, supportive, enabling, institutional, on-campus context on the one hand, and the more challenging, discriminative, larger off-campus, host-society context on the other.

The second study using the case study approach focused on the adaptation experiences of TIS, in two different cultures: Hungary and the United States. This is the first study to investigate both the cross-cultural adaptation of TIS in Hungary and the first comparative study on TIS' adaptation experiences in different countries. The findings of this study showed that, when compared to their co-nationals studying in an English-speaking country, TIS studying in Hungary – a country which offers English medium instruction programs – faced some serious difficulties such as in-school separation from local students However, due to a shared historical background between Hungarians and Turks, TIS in Hungary have experienced many cultural similarities in their relations and daily lives unlike TIS in the United States. The perceived low cultural distance between Hungary and Turkey positively affected their cross-cultural adaptation process. Whereas, TIS in the United States experienced stress that hindered adaptation due to certain political developments in the United States and their political relations with Turkey.

The third study, in which data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis focused on the adjustment challenges and help-seeking of TIS studying at various universities in the United States during their cross-cultural adaptation process. The results suggested that TIS experienced several adjustment challenges that affected their general well-being and satisfaction and made their adjustment process harder. According to the results, TIS initially sought help from family members, advisors, or friends to overcome their adjustment challenges. Dissatisfaction among TIS due

to a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of mental health providers negatively affected the students' help-seeking from professional services.

The findings from our thesis clearly highlight that TIS with the same cultural background in the cross-cultural adaptation process had unique experiences based on the three different host countries they studied. The academic setting and opportunities, environmental factors, and social/societal relations offered by the host country to TIS in an ecological context differentiated the adaptation experiences of TIS. The same was true for both the physical and cultural distance between the host country and Turkey, and the host country's political relations with Turkey/Turks.

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CHAPTER I
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, individuals from different cultures have been in contact with each other for various reasons such as trade, conquering and colonizing, or learning about foreign societies. Today, cross-cultural contact has expanded globally due to political and economic changes, cultural interaction, ease of travel, and so forth. Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) state that the process of cultural contact within and between societies can be defined and categorized based on different aspects, including people or groups who have experienced the contact (majority, minority, sojourners), time-span (long, medium, or short term), purpose (studying, making a life, recreation), and type of involvement (voluntary or involuntary). These variables have different effects on the personal psychology of individuals, and as a result of cultural contact, both individual and societal change is inevitable (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

International students, whose numbers have increased significantly in recent years, are among the most exposed to cultural contact. They are sojourners who have a temporary residence and move abroad voluntarily for their studies. To elaborate, the concept of sojourner is used to describe between-society cultural travelers such as businesspersons, diplomats, and international students (Ward et al., 2001). Accordingly, these individuals are not permanent in the host country and it is assumed that they intend to return to their home country after achieving their purpose of visit (Ward et al., 2001). Although there is no strict criterion for the duration, international students usually stay abroad for the duration of their diploma or degree, often between 6 months and 5 years. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2021), the population of international students has grown from around 2 million in 2000 to over 6 million in 2019, and it is estimated that this number will continue to increase rapidly.

Studying abroad provides potential benefits to individuals and host countries. Accordingly, competition has arisen between countries to attract and retain international students (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). In addition to the international students' academic and cultural contributions to campus life (Andrade, 2009), they also provide significant cultural and economic contributions to the host country (Brown & Aktas, 2011; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). On the other hand, studying abroad offers international students essential skills required to be successful in today's global economy (Fox & Mclntyre, 2019), such as the increased knowledge and understanding of other cultures (Hoffa & Pearson, 1993), intercultural skills (Langley & Breese, 2005; Williams, 2005), and interpersonal and communication skills (Fox & Mclntyre, 2019).

Besides these numerous opportunities, moving to a foreign country to study also means radical life changes and challenges in the lives of international students (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Ward et al., 2001). Students need to go through an important period of adaptation to the new country, considering cultural, social, emotional, and academic dimensions (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011), and their ability to function effectively in the new society depends on their adaptation. Accordingly, international students need to learn new social norms, new educational systems, new forms of relationships, a new language, etc., in their new milieu (Doucerain, 2019). During this period, individuals may experience sociocultural (e.g., new behavioral patterns), psychological (i.e., mental health status and behavior), biological (e.g., new foods and diet), and physical changes (e.g., a new type of housing) (Berry, 1988). Adapting to a new culture, then, is a life-changing experience. The nature and extent of the changes that occur in a very wide range depend on many variables, including the conditions in which the contact takes place (Ward et al., 2001). Cross-cultural adaptation of international students, as the focus of this research, examines the adaptation process of students from the same cultural background, which may differ depending on the contextual factors of the different host countries in which the contact takes place.

The Present Research

The cross-cultural adaptation process of students who were born and grew up in one cultural context and maintain their education in another context differs depending on their culture of origin and the host culture (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Therefore, examining the experiences of students with the same cultural background, but in different contexts is essential to a better understanding of the adaptation experiences that may differ between the host cultures. Accordingly, in the first instance, we selected Turkish international students as the target population for investigation due to the group's specific cultural features and their growing number. Turkey is the only Muslim-majority country that has a secular constitution. While an active exchange between Eastern and Western values and attitudes contributes to the strengthening of individualism in Turkey, Turkish culture adamantly preserves its collectivist nature (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Mocan-Aydin, 2000). Additionally, in parallel with the rising student mobility worldwide, the number of Turkish students studying abroad has gradually increased. According to Ministry of Education statistics (as cited in Tansel & Gungor, 2003), the population of Turkish students who went abroad to study in 2001 was around 21,500, while UIS (2021) shows that this number exceeded 47,600 in 2019. It is predicted that the number of TIS will increase steadily.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, the cross-cultural adaptation process is influenced by features of the context in which cultural contact takes place. In this process, the greater the cultural differences between the individual's heritage/home culture and the settlement/host culture, the greater the culture conflict this individual might face and the more likely the individual will experience acculturative stress (Ward et al., 2001). Therefore, it is important to understand the adaptation patterns of students that vary according to the host culture's unique influence on the adaptation process, and this research has been conducted in the three different contexts of Hungary, Germany, and the United States (US). Correspondingly, we addressed the following research question:

What were the lived experiences of TIS in Hungary, Germany, and the United States during the cross-cultural adaptation process?

What were the effects of the cultural characteristics of the host countries on the cross-cultural adaptation process of students from the same cultural background?

How did the cultural, social, emotional, and academic aspects of the sojourn affect the multidimensional cross-cultural adaptation experiences of TIS?

UIS (n.d.) indicates that a majority of TIS – about 9,500 – studied in the United States. Tansel and Gungor (2003) have explained that TIS chose the United States universities due to motivating factors such as living standards, academic reputation, and educational opportunities (e.g., scholarships, diversity in the fields of study, and curriculum). Germany is the second most popular country for TIS and the most preferred non-English speaking country for Turkish students who seek higher education opportunities abroad. According to the statistics of UIS (n.d.) the number of TIS at German universities has increased currently, and currently exceeds 8,000. Germany's physical proximity to Turkey and possible job opportunities, as well as the high reputation of German universities, are factors that attract TIS (Suoglu, 2012). Furthermore, Germany's public higher education institutions have been providing greater diversity in fields of study and have waivered tuition fees since 2014 (Huther & Krucken, 2018). Similar growth trends have been observed in Hungary, which hosts over 1,000 TIS (UIS, n.d.). The Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship program offered by the Hungarian government to approximately 150 Turkish students each year, English medium instruction programs in universities, and physical proximity to Turkey are some of the important factors influencing the growing popularity of Hungary for TIS.

Despite the similarities in the trends observed regarding the growing number of TIS, these three countries have different contextual features to take into account when considering the adaptation of TIS. First, the language of education, and the official language, in the United

States is English. Considering the environmental context, the United States is geographically distant from Turkey and has a significant time-zone difference (7 to 10 hours depending on the region) and different climatic and environmental conditions from Turkey. Moreover, the cultural diversity of the US population is high. There were several waves of migration to the United States from Turkey over different periods of time (Karpat, 2006). The current estimate for individuals of Turkish origin living in the United States in 2019 is 222,489 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). They are present in almost all the major cities, have established their non-profit organizations such as the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), consisting of 60 chapters established by local Turkish communities (ATAA, 2021), have their ethnic media including newspapers, magazines, radio, internet media and TV channels (Yesil, 2013) that offer the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with each other. In addition, Turkish students at US universities have established local Turkish student associations under the ATAA. These associations have their websites, organize meetings and support the solidarity of TIS at US universities. Akgun (2000) claimed that highly educated individuals constitute the core of Turkish society in the United States.

Secondly, 100% English, 100% German, and 50% English - 50% German programs are available for students in Germany. It is in a relatively similar time-zone (1-hour difference), geographically close to Turkey, and has different climatic conditions from Turkey. In addition, Germany is the country most populated by Turkish people after Turkey itself (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018). The Turkish-West German labor recruitment agreement was signed in 1961 and has led to the largest population of Turks outside of Turkey (Icduygu, 2012). Since then, their number has continued to grow, and now, at more than seven million individuals, Turkish immigrants constitute the largest minority group in Germany (Zestos & Cooke, 2020). In addition, they are stereotyped in Germany as being uneducated and religiously fundamentalist (Erensu & Adanli, 2004). Issues around Turkish immigration are frequently discussed in German media and on academic platforms. Therefore, the culture-specific (i.e., cultural values and affiliation to the Turkish minority group) as well as sojourner-specific (i.e., motivation for adaptation) conditions of TIS in Germany, and the impact of the generally negative stereotypes of Turkish immigrants in this country should also be considered.

Thirdly, Hungarian universities offer English medium instruction (EMI) programs for international students, although the official language of the country is Hungarian. Hungary, in a similar time-zone (1-2 hour(s) difference), is geographically close to Turkey and shares similar climatic conditions. Culturally, Hungary is ethnically less heterogeneous

than Germany and the United States, with less than 2% of its population being foreign nationals (Kozponti Statisztikai Hivatal, 2019). Although there were 1501 Turkish immigrants in Hungary in 2016 (Kozponti Statisztikai Hivatal, 2018), there is no established official association that helps Turks living in the country. Hungarians had first-hand contact with Turks for almost 150 years during Ottoman rule (1526–1686) and have been influenced by Turks in many areas (Guler, 2018). Thus, there are several common features between the Turkish and Hungarian cultures. For example, there exist about 300 Turkish words in the Hungarian language (Kakuk, 2002), Turkish architecture in different cities, Turkish foods and handicrafts etc. (Guler, 2018).

Hofstede (2011) labeled six dimensions of culture; power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long term versus short term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence versus restraint. Each country is statistically scored across all dimensions (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, each country is positioned relative to the others (Hofstede, 2011) and can be compared. The results of Hungary, Germany, the United States and Turkey are as in Figure 1.
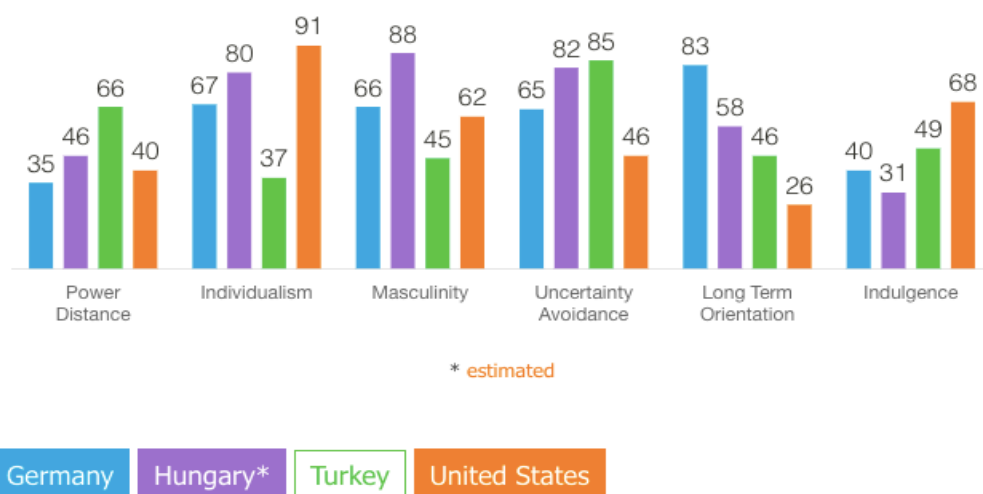
Figure 1. The cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011).

Uncertainty avoidance represents the stress level of the individuals of a society about future uncertainties (Hofstede, 2011). In lower uncertainty avoidance cultures, individuals tend not to perceive uncertainty as a threat, to be more tolerant and to take risks recklessly, and are also more informal and do not like written and unwritten rules (Hofstede, 2011; House et al., 2004). Considering this dimension of culture, Turkey and Hungary similarly score higher than Germany or the United States. Also, Turkey and Hungary are close in terms

of the power distance dimension that expresses the degree to which less powerful members of institutions organizations and organizations accept, and expect, power to be shared unequally and the long/short term orientation dimension that represents the long or short term expectations, plans and goals of the societies according to the time horizons of the societies (Hofstede, 2001). Individuals learn to accept low or high power distance from their families and support groups from an early age (House et al., 2004). In societies where power distance is strong, individuals in institutions and organizations, including the family, are more accepting of power inequality, and approve and respect authority (House et al., 2004). However, in societies with low power distance, individuals value more equal treatment (Hofstede, 2001; 2011)

Individualism/collectivism represents "the integration of individuals into primary groups" (Hofstede, 2011, p.8). In individualistic cultures, interpersonal ties are looser, the purpose of education is to learn, and tasks are more important than relationships while in collectivistic cultures where there is a "we" consciousness, maintaining harmony and relationships are more important than tasks, and the purpose of education is to learn how to do something (Hofstede, 2011). Also, the indulgence versus restraint dimension represents the free fulfillment or control of basic and natural human desires in a society (Hofstede, 2011). In cultures with a lower indulgence score, human desires related to enjoying life and having fun are regulated by strict social norms, and also, freedom of speech and leisure are less important (Hofstede, 2011). In terms of individualism/collectivism and indulgence dimensions, Turkey's score is closer to Germany's than Hungary and the United States. On the other hand, in terms of the masculinity versus femininity dimension which expresses the distribution of the values and roles of men and women socially rather than individually, the score closest to Turkey's is that of the United States (Hofstede, 2001). In masculine cultures, assertiveness and competitiveness, and financial success are at the forefront, and gender roles are clearly different (Hofstede, 2011). However, being humble and caring, and quality of life are at the forefront in female countries, and gender roles are more fluid (Hofstede, 2011).

Besides, Gelfand et al. (2011) conducted a study in 33 countries to show the difference between tight cultures with strong social norms and strong sanction for deviance from the norms and loose countries with weak social norms and more tolerance for deviance from the norms. Loose cultures are more tolerant and flexible, and individuals in these cultures can more easily implement their own preferences (Gelfand et al., 2011). As seen in Figure 2., Turkey is tighter than Hungary, Germany, and the United States.
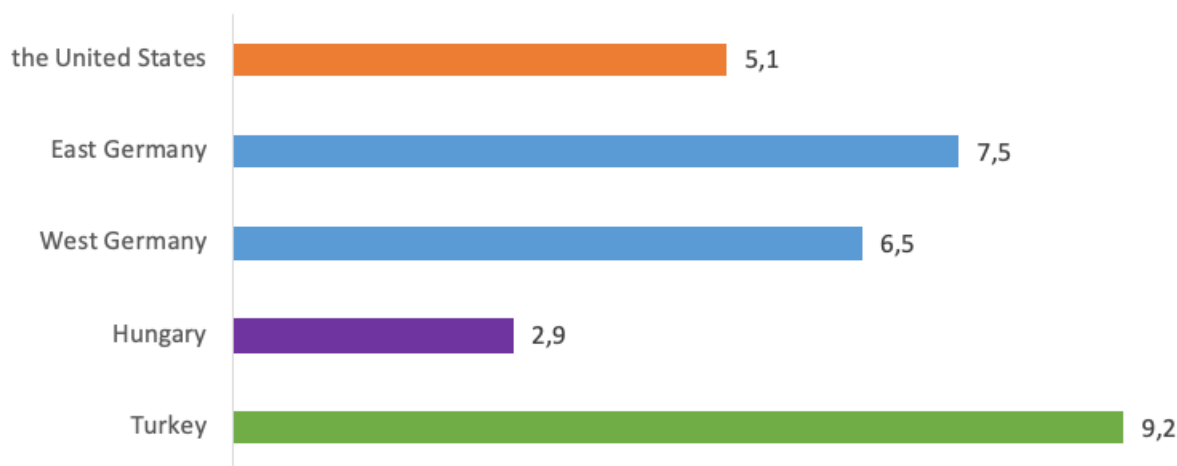
Figure 2. Looseness – tightness scores of cultures (Gelfand et al., 2011).

Consequently, Hungary, Germany, and the United States were chosen as target countries in this research, because it is essential to examine the experiences of students who have the same cultural background in contexts with different characteristics to show more clearly the adaptation experiences that may be influenced by the host culture. Hence, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the adaptation experiences of TIS sojourners in Hungary, Germany, and the United States. Since the aim of this research is to understand the adaptation process of TIS and to obtain information about their experiences, constructivist/interpretative philosophical stances have been adopted in this research, which require trusting the participants' point of view (Creswell, 2013). According to the constructivist/interpretative paradigm, truth is context dependent (Chilisa, 2011). There is no single reality, that is, reality is pluralistic and also socially constructed and subjective and the constructivist primarily cares about understanding the richness of the socially determined world (Richards, 2003).

Also, we preferred the qualitative research method because it allows researchers to explore participants' inner experiences and analyze how meanings are shaped through and within a culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Besides, qualitative research offers the advantage of examining and conceptualizing contextual effects (Yardley, 2017). Thus, a richness and depth of understanding that are unlikely to be reached with quantitative data are obtained with the qualitative method (Skinner, Tag & Holloway, 2000). The research design adopted an inductive approach for qualitative data analysis that was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions. Also, each study constituting this research has different research question(s) and different qualitative analysis techniques have been chosen according to these different research questions (e.g., CQR and thematic analysis).

Ethical approval to conduct this research was received from the ELTE PPK's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in 2016. This research was conducted under the ongoing project "Psychological aspects of international mobility in higher education: Adaptation and acculturation of students studying abroad" supported by the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office – NKFIH, Budapest, Hungary (K-120433), and led by Prof. Dr. Lan Anh Nguyen Luu.

We used the purposive sampling method when selecting our participants. In purposeful sampling, researchers choose the participants depending on the purpose of the research (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). As Patton (2002) stated, it is based on the principle that information-rich examples will be selected in order to examine and reflect the phenomenon in depth. Participants were recruited by distributing recruitment flyers, detailing information about the research, through social media groups consisting of Turkish international students. Considering Ward et al. (2001)' s definition of sojourners, the participants were deliberately selected because of some features they have. Accordingly, we determined the criteria for participating in the research: to have voluntarily gone to the host country for education, to have spent all of their life in Turkey until then, to have a Turkish passport/ID, and to have lived in the host country for at least three months. Hence, among the applicants, two volunteers who had moved to the host country by means of family reunification, two volunteers who self-identified as Turkish but did not have Turkish passports/ID and a volunteer who had been residing in the host country for one and a half months were not included in the research.

Specifically, in chapter 2, we focus on the adaptation experiences of TIS in Germany while considering their cultural and educational backgrounds. It contributes to adaptation literature as it focuses on defining themes related to TIS, a particular nationality-cultural group that has not been studied in the context of Germany. One contribution involves the findings regarding the impact on one country's international students of disparaging stereotypes and discrimination aimed at a large community of immigrants from the same country. The study also contributes to the extant literature by calling attention to the sharply different experiences of TIS in the safe, supportive, enabling, institutional, on-campus context on the one hand, and the more challenging, discriminative, larger off-campus, host-society context on the other hand. Knowledge about the TIS' experiences in Germany may provide important implications and inform counselors and psychologists, who work with them in German universities, in the delivery of culturally relevant and effective counseling services.

In chapter 3, we aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the adaptation experiences of TIS in Hungary and the United States. This study is important in terms of clearly showing the variables of the adaptation process that may differ according to the host country, and the effect of these variables, by examining the experiences of individuals with the same cultural background in two different countries. In addition, it is essential to note that this research is the first study on TIS' adaptation in Hungary and the first comparative study on TIS' cross-cultural adaptation in different contexts. Also, our comparative study shed light on the impact of the teaching language and local language being the same or different. To the best of our best knowledge, this has not yet been adequately researched. Additionally, we pointed out the effect of current political relations, as well as distal historical interactions between the host countries and home country, on the adaptation process of international students. Moreover, we revealed the contribution of both school and urban facilities to the adaptation process and also the role and importance of geographical distance in the adaptation process. The findings we identified could be particularly useful when trying to improve academic environments.

In chapter 4, we focus on challenges and help-seeking among TIS in the United States during the adjustment process. According to the findings, TIS faced many challenges while living in the United States, including language issues and discrimination. To cope with these challenges, they sought help from different groups of individuals, depending on the situation. The findings showed that TIS turned first to their families for help and support. Help-seeking from professionals was determined by the participants' perceptions of counseling services and the cultural sensitivity of the mental health providers. The findings of the present study may help mental health providers to address the needs of TIS effectively as a specific cultural group in multicultural settings.

Review of Literature

This section presents the theoretical frameworks used in the present research, as well as studies on cross-cultural adaptation and acculturation of international students including TIS.

Theoretical Framework(s)

This research was informed by Ward and colleagues' (2001) and Ward and Geeraert's (2016) theoretical frameworks that describe the cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic process, and by the literature that focuses on adaptation and acculturation of international students, including TIS. As seen in Figure 1., Ward et al. (2001) broadly divided the acculturation process, in which individuals learn to adapt to a new culture, into psychological

adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological and sociocultural adaptations are affected by both individual level (characteristics of both the person and situation) and societal level variables (social, political, economic, and cultural factors of society at both origin and settlement) (Ward et al., 2001). Accordingly, this model which integrates both stress and coping, and culture learning perspectives on acculturation, is an organizing framework in which the affective, behavioral, and cognitive components (ABCs of acculturation) of intercultural transition and intercultural interactions are synthesized. These interacting factors represent a process occurring over time. Both affective and behavioral components together require changes in the cognitive component that represents changes in social identities as a consequence of acculturation.

According to Ward and colleagues (2001), travelers respond actively in the cultural transition process. The "culture learning" perspective that focuses on the behavioral component leading to sociocultural adaptation represents the acquiring of new skills and learning culturally relevant, social knowledge in order to adapt to the host country (Ward et al., 2001). Sociocultural adaptation relates to how one effectively navigates the culture on a daily basis (Searle & Ward, 1990). Verbal and nonverbal communication such as gestures, personal distance, and direct/indirect expression in speech or using the first name in new relations differs between cultures and ethnic groups. Social difficulties are a function of cultural distance (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). Most people are not even aware of these differences, and when individuals from two different cultures come together, they will have difficulty relating to each other in terms of these differences. Depending on their cultural background, it is possible to unconsciously send unwanted messages or misunderstand incoming messages between people who communicate. For example, while it is normal for two individuals of the same sex to hug each other and kiss each other on the cheeks in Turkish society, this is a sign of homosexuality, especially for males, in American culture. In addition, the conditions that affect the daily life of individuals, such as the climate, currency, and diet/food of the host culture, vary according to the country and require adaptation skills. Therefore, Ward et al. (2001) emphasize the importance of acquiring the necessary social and behavioral skills and social interactions related to the host culture so that cultural travelers to survive and thrive in their new societies. A lack of necessary social and behavioral skills causes cultural travelers to experience challenges and distress in their new environment as well as the occurrence of misunderstandings, frictions, and hostilities between these individuals and members of the host country.

On the other hand, a "stress and coping" perspective focuses on the affective component that leads to psychological adaptation and represents the feelings of psychological well-being and emotional satisfaction within the lives of individuals while they cope with acculturative stress. That is, psychological adjustment relates to how one feels about being in the new culture (Searle & Ward, 1990). Ward and colleagues (2001) argue that cultural contact is a stressful life event and changes experienced during the cross-cultural transition are the source of adverse emotional reactions. Individuals need to appraise these changes cognitively and also choose and implement strategies for coping with emerging stress. Cultural travelers' coping strategies and resources can affect their perception of the challenges in the adaptation process (Ward et al., 2001). Namely, coping responses can either ameliorate or exacerbate individuals' acculturative stress. For example, previous studies have shown that coping strategies such as humor, positive thinking, acceptance, and social support positively affect students' satisfaction, while wishful thinking and avoidance increase stress levels (e.g., Chataway & Berry, 1989; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Ward & Kennedy, 2001). That is, one individual perceives a change in life as threatening, while another may consider it an opportunity to contribute to his/her personal development. Failure to control the stress level that arises during the adaptation process may cause distressing symptoms.

As seen in Figure 1., on the micro-level, the characteristics of the person and the situation exert both a direct and moderating impact on psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. They mediate the appraisal of the stress and coping responses. Personality, language fluency, experience, cultural identity, acculturation strategies, values and reasons for migration are some of the factors constituting the characteristics of the person. For example, when personality traits are taken into account, it has been suggested in the literature that traits such as (higher) neuroticism hinder cross-cultural adjustment (Ward, Leong & Low, 2004), while others such as self-esteem, flexibility, extraversion, and open-mindedness facilitate adaptation (e.g., Berry, 1997; Bethel, Szabo & Ward, 2016; Huff, Song & Gresch, 2014; Wilson, Ward & Fischer, 2013). On the other hand, cultural distance, intergroup relations, social support, length of cultural contact, and amount of life changes are some factors affecting the characteristics of the situation. For instance, it is possible to encounter a series of stress-provoking life changes such as the food eaten, the clothes worn, the means of transportation used, the forms of relationships, and living standards within the intercultural transition. There is a consistent relationship between the amount of life changes and physical and psychological distress.
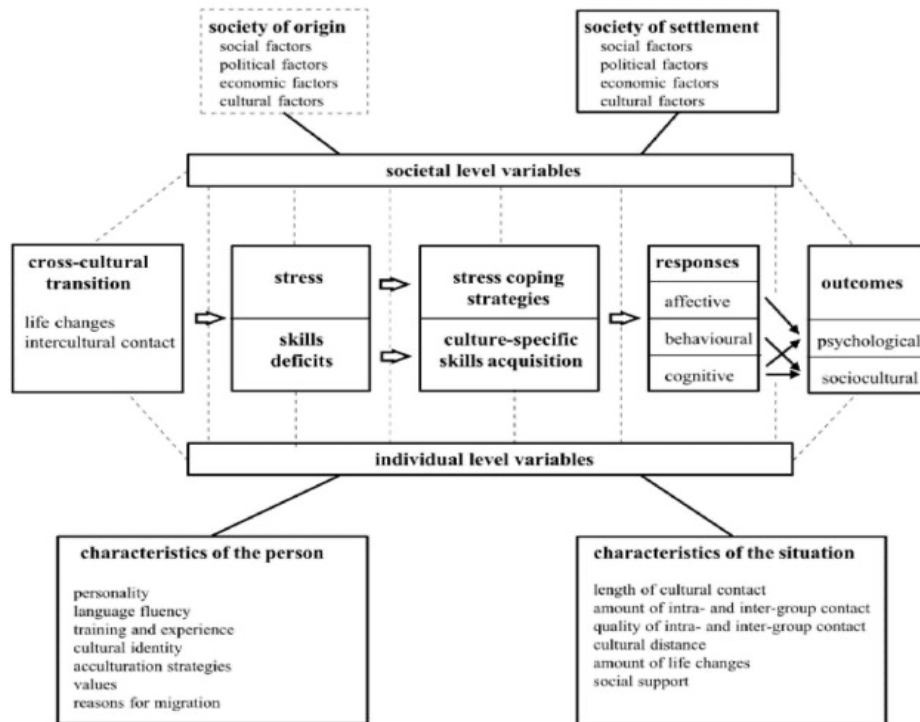
Figure 2. The acculturation process (adapted from Ward et al., 2001).

At the macro level, the society of origin and society of settlement affect acculturation and adaptation, influenced by environmental factors. Ward and Geeraert's (2016) have recommended an ecological model for the studying of acculturation-adaptation processes, with different levels – familial, institutional, and societal – of context in both cultures of origin and host culture being taken into account as seen in Figure 2. Ward and Geeraert (2016) use the principle of cultural distance. Understanding the nature and characteristics of the home culture and host culture is essential in the model. As the cultural distance increases, acculturative stress grows, and both psychological adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation are negatively affected (Ward & Geeraert, 2016).
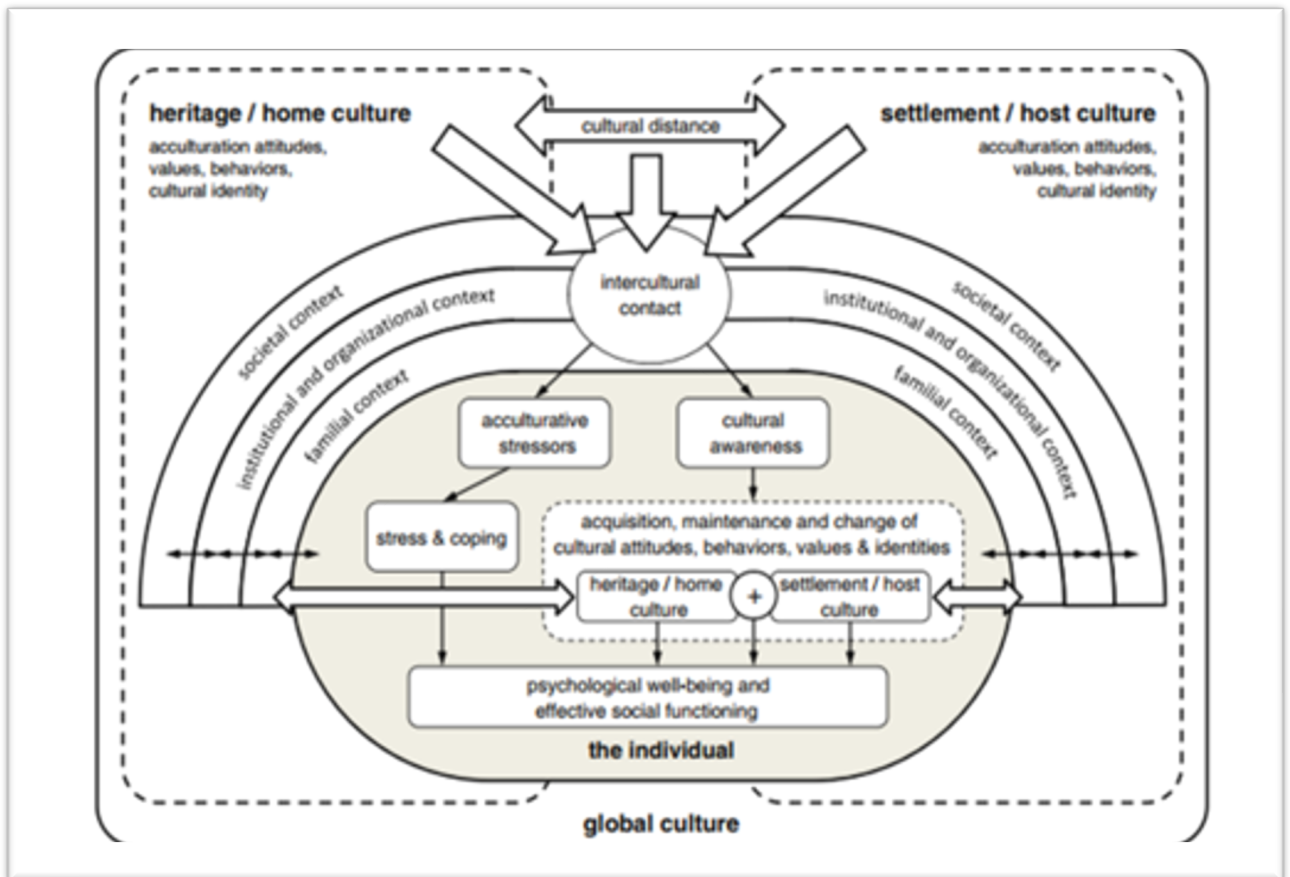
Figure 3. Acculturation process and context: framework for studying immigrants and sojourners (adapted from Ward & Geeraert, 2016).

Even if psychological acculturation takes place at the individual level, cross-cultural adaptation and acculturation occur in the family context when the cultural travelers have migrated with their families, not alone (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). As the contextual antecedents of the acculturation process, family-related variables mediate contextual effects on individuals' psychological and sociocultural adaptations (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2006). There may be differences in acculturation between individuals and their parents or children (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). This situation, which is called the acculturation gap, depending on the direction of the differences, affects people's well-being and social functioning and often, but not always, causes stress (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). However, positive relationships and open communication within the family can prevent the potential adverse effects of the acculturation gap and contribute to the adaptation process (Kim & Park, 2011).

Besides the family, another important context for the acculturation and adaptation of young people is the school. In terms of institution and organization, the social support of

teachers and peers encourages students' positive attitudes towards the host country (Tartakovsky, 2012). Conversely, especially when considering assimilationist pressures, the school context can cause tension and separation (Niens et al., 2013). Similarly, the work environment can influence the adaptation and acculturation of adults (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Organizations that consider multiculturalism and have appropriate policies and practices promote inclusiveness as well as cultural minority involvement (Apfelbaum, Norton & Sommers, 2012). Thus, the ground is created for increased interaction in the workplace and more positive results related to adaptation. Perceived organizational support facilitates the psychological, social, and work adaptation of individuals.

Furthermore, in the societal context, attitudes towards diversity and minorities, the policies (multicultural or assimilationist), and the expectations of the host country regarding the cultural orientation of minorities affect the acculturation and adaptation of minorities (Berry 2016; Ward & Geeraert, 2016). A multicultural atmosphere may result in more positive attitudes towards the host culture, while an assimilationist and prejudiced atmosphere may persist in the orientation from the home culture and lead to lower life satisfaction (Kus-Harbord & Ward, 2015). As a result, different contexts and acculturation conditions have an impact on adaptation. Masgoret and Ward (2006) claim that challenges arising from different contexts can be overcome through context-specific learning.

Before departing from the theoretical framework of acculturation, it should be noted that the idea was put forward that different contexts and acculturation conditions have an impact on acculturation processes and outcomes, clearly, in the acculturation model of Arends-Toth and van de Vijver (2006). Similarly, Safdar, Lay and Struthers's (2003) acculturation model draws attention to the impact of different contexts on the acculturation process, as individuals' daily hassles and their perceptions of their circumstances are among the predictive variables of acculturation. Likewise, in his acculturation model, Berry (1997), emphasizing the changes in the ecology of the society that provides the cultural contact environment, drew attention to the social, cultural and institutional effects that affect the interaction and behavior of the members of the society. Whereas, in the literature, no model specifically describes the adaptation and acculturation of international students. However, Ward et al.'s (2001) approach considers different dimensions of cross-cultural travelers, such as status (e.g., immigrant, international student, refugee), and situation (e.g., purpose, time-span, type of involvement) (Ward et al., 2001). Also, the focus of Ward & Geeraert's (2016) model that uses the principle of cultural distance, gives the entire ecological context in which the cross-cultural adaptation and acculturation of sojourners and immigrants occur. Therefore,

Ward and colleagues' (2001; 2016) theoretical models provide a comprehensive framework to explore and analyze the adaptation process of TIS who sojourned in Hungary, Germany and the Unites States voluntarily and temporarily for education.

Studies on Acculturation and Cross-cultural Adaptation of International Students

Considering the available literature, international students experience academic adaptation as a component of the general adaptation process, unlike other individuals and groups who experience cultural contact (e.g., Zhou et al., 2008; Bastien, Seifen-Adkins & Johnson, 2018). In the host country, which offers a different education system than their own, international students need to learn many differences in the academic environment, such as the pedagogical system, exam and grading system, and corporate communication style, and they need to adapt by gaining competence (Mori, 2000). Academic adaptation goes beyond international students' potential for academic success and motivation and also includes factors such as institutional commitment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994), taking action to meet academic demands, and overall satisfaction with their academic life (Baker & Siryk,1999). On the other hand, regarding the stressors that international students face, their coping strategies, and social support networks are key components for given Ward and colleagues (2001; 2016) and other existing models, as well as the significant portion of the studies on international students' adaptation and acculturation (e.g., Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Stressors faced by international students

Sudden life changes may become stressors, especially if the international students do not have the appropriate resources to cope with them (Safdar, Lay & Struthers, 2003; Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2006). Due to the challenging nature of the change, the stress that occurs in the cross-cultural adaptation process in a new country may result in distressing symptoms such as depression, anxiety disorder, homesickness, insecurity, isolation, irritability, sleep problems, and eating disorders (Mori, 2000; Nilsson et al., 2004; Pedersen, 1991; Poyrazli & Mitchell, 2020; Yakushko, Davidson & Sanford-Martens, 2008). These symptoms may affect the general well-being, satisfaction, and academic attainment of international students in their new milieu (Chiu, 1995; Poyrazli & Mitchell, 2020). This section reviews main and common acculturation stressors in the international student literature.

First of all, the language barrier is one of the most intense challenges for international students, especially in the first period of the intercultural transition period (Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021), is the most common stressor in cross-cultural adaptation (e.g., Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Mori, 2000; Wilson et al., 2013). Sumer, Poyrazli and Grahame (2008) and Smith and

Khawaja (2011) mention that the international students' language proficiency is an essential predictor of acculturative stress and psychological distress that affects both international students' well-being and satisfaction in their adaptation process. Similarly, in Andrade's (2009) and Yakunina, Weigold and McCarthy's (2010) studies, language fluency has been associated with international students' depression and mental health symptoms, among other factors. The language barrier restricts the social relations of international students (Fulop & Sebestyen, 2012; Poyrazli et al., 2002; Roszik-Volovik & Nguyen Luu, 2020;), and they may experience loneliness, isolation, and anxiety (Ching et al., 2017).

In addition, language proficiency is a predictor of international students' academic achievement (Alharbi & Smith, 2018). Due to the language barrier, students have difficulties in expressing themselves both inside and outside the classroom and in understanding their teachers and the people around them (Kim, 2011; Mori, 2000). Zhang and Goodson (2011) claim that insufficient language proficiency can trigger procrastination, which can increase the stress level of students and cause a decrease in the quality of their academic performance. Also, in the study Yeh and Inose (2003) conducted with the participation of 359 international students from American universities, students who speak more fluent English reported that they are more self-confident in their daily lives, can communicate more easily, and have higher performance in the classroom. Relatedly, they reported that students with higher English proficiency experienced lower levels of adaptation difficulties.

Secondly, international students face some acculturation stressors in their new academic settings. Although all students experience academic stress, international students' increased stress due to both second language anxiety and adaptation to their new educational environment may cause their academic stress to increase (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). For example, cultural differences in the academic setting (e.g., calling instructors by name is appropriate in Hungary but not in Turkey), different teaching styles/education system (Fulop & Sebestyen, 2012; Li et al., 2018; Townsend & Poh, 2008), heavy course load (Li et al., 2018), differences in academic performance expectations between teachers, families and students (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000), and language barriers (Yan & Berliner, 2013) are some of the potential acculturative stressors in the academic environment that may affect the adaptation process of international students.

In their qualitative study that conducted in the United States, Elturki et al., (2019) indicated that international students misunderstood, or did not understand, some lessons due to the pronunciation of their native instructors' spoken English, as well as their own limited academic vocabulary. Furthermore, the effort needed to meet the standards of a different

education system in the United States was an added worry for international students. In addition, Baklashova and Kazakow (2016) found that international students in Russia were isolated by not being preferred in classroom activities and discussions by their classmates, and had difficulty in establishing friendships with their classmates. Also, international students had difficulty in interaction with their instructors due to sociocultural differences/norms including raising one's hand to speak in the classroom and punctuality in one-on-one meetings (Baklashova & Kazakow, 2016). Additionally, Wu, Garza and Guzman (2015) mentioned that parents of international students pay higher education fees and, accordingly, expect their children to achieve high academic success and complete their undergraduate or graduate study. This situation causes more pressure on international students and increases their stress level.

Thirdly, students may experience challenges in both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication with local people depending on the dissimilarities between their culture of origin and the host culture (Ward et al., 2001) including cultural norms, values and beliefs (e.g., collectivistic or individualistic attitudes), language barrier (Fulop & Sebestyen, 2012), traditions, and the nature of friendships etc. (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Yan & Berliner, 2013). Therefore, international students who leave their friends and family behind and experience a sense of loss may find it difficult to establish a social network or may be dissatisfied with the relationships they have in their new environment, depending not only on their friendship-making ability, but also on their cultural background (Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021). Accordingly, international students may face loneliness, social isolation, homesickness, emotional deprivation and confusion regarding enjoyment in their new environment (McClure, 2007; Sawir et al., 2007; Yjng & Liese, 1994), thus hindering both the psychological and the sociocultural adaptation processes.

Poyrazli et al. (2004) and Schram and Lauver (1988) reported that Asian students who study at American universities and have different normative behaviors and attitudes than students of European origin have greater acculturative stress and a higher risk of alienation. Similarly, Mori (2000) and Yeh and Inose (2003) stated that, because of their cultural background, Asian international students may have more difficulty interacting, and making social connections and friendships in Western culture than other international students. Their independence, individuality and assertiveness are therefore compromised. In addition, Mahmud et al. (2010) mentioned that international students from dissimilar cultures in Malaysia may experience social isolation by misinterpreting the situations and behaviors related to Malaysian culture, that is the public space limitations result in behaviours that the

students interpret as aloofness. Besides, Murphy-Shigematsu (2002) and Lee (2017) reported in their studies that international students have difficulties in interacting with Japanese people due to the nature of "strong sense of group consciousness" of the Japanese and they perceive them as both prejudiced and discriminatory individuals. Moreover, Gebru and Yuksel-Kaptanoglu (2020) stated that international students in Turkey sometimes experience difficult situations because the meanings of nonverbal signs and gestures used by them have different/negative meanings in Turkey than in their own culture. They also reported in their study that a tendency in Turkish people to ask detailed and specific questions on first meeting is disturbing to foreign students who are not used to it and that the students find this situation to be strange.

Fourthly, a sense of being rejected by individuals of the host country is an important acculturative stressor that affects foreigners including international students (Alharbi & Smith, 2018). Experiencing discrimination, which occurs in many forms depending on the perceptions of the affected individuals (Hanassab, 2006), demotivates international students from establishing friendships with locals and causes them to separate from the locals in the adaptation process (Mori, 2000; Pekerti et al., 2020; Yu & Wang, 2011). In addition, such experiences negatively affect international students' well-being (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Lee, 2005) and self-esteem (Nilsson et al., 2008). Moreover, these negative experiences may cause additional challenges for international students such as homesickness (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Kilinc & Granello, 2003).

Hanassab (2006) and Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) reported that negative reactions towards international students, such as discrimination, occurred mostly off-campus. In the study of Lee and Rice (2007), Asian, Latino American, Middle Eastern and non-white students perceived more discrimination than European, Canadian or white students. Also, Jamaludin et al. (2018) reported that discriminatory experiences that hinder the adaptation process lead students to orientate themselves to the mainstream culture less effectively and that this may negatively affect their intentions of loyalty towards the host culture. Furthermore, Schmitt, Spears and Branscombe (2003) revealed that exposure to discrimination negatively affects the self-esteem of international students, causing them to identify more with other international students in order to suppress their sense of exclusion by locals.

Lastly, international students may experience many daily life/practical challenges that contribute to their acculturative stress in the process of adapting to their new environment. Some of these are visa and banking challenges (Hosseini-Nezhad, Safdar & Nguyen Luu,

2021), accommodation problems including high prices, poor conditions, unfavorable location, or insufficient availability of accommodation (e.g., Wenhua & Zhe, 2013). Furthermore, international students in countries whose weather conditions are different from the climate in their homeland may have difficulties in their daily lives and even experience health issues such as allergic reactions (e.g., Fulop & Sebestyen, 2012; Evivie, 2009; Mahmud et al., 2010; Masgoret & Ward, 2006). For example, international students are challenged by the humid climate of Malaysia (Mahmud et al., 2010), the cold and dry climate of Russia (Fayzullina, 2019) or gloomy winter weather of Hungary (Fulop & Sebestyen, 2012). In addition, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) reported that transportation is a significant concern that reinforces campus isolation at semi-urban campuses. This negatively affects international students' basic needs such as grocery shopping and social support systems.

Also, even if they want to continue the food traditions of their own culture, most of international students change their food choices and eating habits during the adaptation process (Alakaam et al., 2015). Perhaps there is insufficient time to cook healthy meals due to the students' busy schedules, or fast-food environments and on-campus food choices limit availability of, and access to, familiar foods (Alakaam et. al., 2015). Changes in their diet and not being able to eat healthily can lead to undesirable health issues (Winham, 2009) including high blood pressure, and mental problems (Alakaam et. al., 2015). Likewise, financial concerns such as unstable financial resources, as well as high living costs and high tuition fees, are among the most common problems related to international students' adaptation challenges (Lee, 2017; Yan & Berliner, 2013). Most of the international students attend school full time and cannot earn additional income because they do not have work permits (Lin & Yi, 1997). According to Gautam et al. (2016), international students with financial problems face difficulties in finding a job on-campus. There is a lack of guidance and information concerning job opportunities. Financial stress, which is related to the inability to meet their needs and wants, negatively affects the learning motivation, social activities, and general well-being of international students (Bernardo and Resurreccion, 2018) and contributes to feelings of alienation, isolation and homesickness (Evivie, 2009).

Coping with acculturative stressors

Besides acculturative stressors, another key component in the literature on adaptation and acculturation of international students is coping strategies. Coping strategies are the ways individuals use to adapt to the tensions that arise during the cross-cultural transition (McClure, 2007). As mentioned in the model of Ward et al. (2001), how and to what extent the acculturation stressors that students encounter during their adaptation process affect them

depends on how students appraise and cope with the stressors they experience and it differs from person to person (Ward et al., 2001). Also, to cope with changing situations, old strategies can be modified or new strategies can be learned instead (Aldwin, 2004).

There are different types of coping in the literature. Lazarus (2000) argued that there are two kinds of stress coping strategies: the problem-focused strategy where an individual prepares and organizes his/her actions intentionally to adjust or alter their relationships with their environment and the emotion-focused strategy where an individual regulates his/her emotions to cope with the environment without changing it. Additionally, Folkman (2008) defined individuals' efforts to reevaluate their stress situation in a positive way as a meaning-focused strategy in order to maintain their well-being and cope with the stress situation they experience. These strategies can be used simultaneously or sequentially in any relevant situation (Aldwin, 2004). Also, the preferences of coping methods may differ according to cultures (Aldwin, 2004). For example, Chataway and Berry's (1989) study in Canada found that French and English international students used more positive thinking coping strategies, and Asian international students used more maladaptive and less positive stress reduction methods such as drug use and alcohol. Besides, Zheng and Berry (1991) showed that, compared to non-Chinese sojourners, Chinese sojourners preferred more tension reduction and informational support and less wishful thinking and self-blame as a coping method. Also, in their examination of coping with cultural adjustment among Chinese, Korean, and Japanese immigrant youth in the United States, Yeh and Inose (2002) found that, for Korean youth, religion was a popular coping tool, while Japanese youth used social support more than the other two groups did.

Regarding coping strategies to overcome language issues, McClure (2007) revealed that international students who are concerned about their English proficiency in the academic setting try to cope by using the "memorization" method in their studies, as well as by seeking instrumental and emotional support from their peers. In addition, Wu et al. (2015) showed that a coping strategy for international students was involvement with institutions such as local churches as a way of improving their English. Similarly, they would use resources such as the on-campus writing center, or they might participate in school activities and student organizations in order to deal with language barriers. Moreover, Kao and Craigie (2013) noted that positive thinking is a common coping strategy that reduces the language learning anxiety of international students.

Regarding coping strategies to overcome academic issues, McClure (2007) indicated that, in order to reduce the stress caused by the intense academic schedule, some international

students focused on the passing score instead of the highest score and adjusted the time they worked to pass the exams accordingly. Also, Wu et al. (2015) reported that students recorded the lectures and this helped them to review and retain information afterwards. Additionally, McClure (2007) showed in his study that, in order to solve problems related to their academic issues, Chinese students in the United States used self-motivation and self-determination, and worked hard for long hours.

Regarding coping strategies to overcome sociocultural issues, Lee (2017) reported that by choosing to stay with a minority family (e.g., living with a Filipino family in Japan), international students were able to reduce the negative emotions caused by the discriminative attitudes of the locals. In addition, another coping strategy used by students regarding their sociocultural problems was to stay positive, believing that even if they had difficulties in their cross-cultural experiences, they believed that it would be worth it and would pay off in the long run. Also, Wang and Hannes (2013) mentioned that in order to understand and learn about the local culture, international students participate in different activities in public places, such as going to local markets and shopping, traveling, and volunteering in social work. Wu et al. (2015) stated that making use of on-campus sports facilities, cooking for friends are among the coping strategies that students use to expand and strengthen their social relationships.

Regarding coping strategies to overcome daily living issues, Lee (2017) noted that international students economise by cooking their own meals and they also apply for various scholarship opportunities. Besides, Alazzi and Chioda (2006) revealed participating in religious activities in order to cope with stress is a strategy used by international students from the Middle East.

Social support of international students

Social support is defined as both psychological and material resources provided to meet an individual's needs for attention, belonging, security, and approval (Cohen, 2004). Ward et al. (2001) emphasized that social support facilitates cross-cultural adaptation by reducing any stress that emerged from intercultural contact. It can lead to a reappraisal of the stressful situation or facilitate adjustive counter-responses to it (Cohen & Wills, 1985). It is more important for international students to feel the usefulness/quality of the social support they receive than the size of the support network they have (Ye, 2006). According to Cohen and Wills (1985), social support contributes to the well-being of individuals by creating emotional (e.g., getting acceptance despite personal faults, love), informational (e.g., someone giving advice on dealing with the problem encountered), social companionship (e.g., friends

having fun in leisure time) and instrumental/tangible (e.g., borrowing money or sharing lecture notes) resources. The absence of social support is correlates positively with the increased probability of physical and mental illness in the process of cross-cultural adaptation (Hammer, 1987). Szabo, Papp and Nguyen Luu (2020) also drew attention to the fact that not having adequate social relations can have negative effects on mental health. Sources of social support include an individual's close network such as family members and friends, or professionals such as counselors and psychiatrists (Mojaverian, Hashimoto & Kim, 2013).

Ward et al. (2001) distinguish the source of social support as co-nationals, locals, and other internationals. The outcome for international students who mix with locals, co-nationals and other internationals, is a higher sense of well-being (e.g., Bender et al., 2019; Szabo, Papp & Nguyen Luu, 2020). Regarding the receiving of social support from locals, many studies have shown that it improves the well-being of international students and facilitates the adaptation process (Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013; Searle & Ward, 1990). Williams and Johnson (2011) investigated the relationship between local and international students, and the impact of this relationship on international students' academic performance. They showed social relations with local students facilitate the dealing with acculturative stress and positively affect the academic performance of internationals. Further, Yan and Berliner (2013) showed that the receipt of social support from locals facilitates both the daily life and academic life of international students, and therefore increases their satisfaction by reducing their acculturative stress. Similarly, Poyrazli et al. (2004) indicated that those who primarily socialized with non-locals reported more acculturation stress than those who had social relationships with locals or those who had equal social relationships with both local and non-local groups.

Regarding social support from family, Bertram et al. (2014) stated that even though they are far away, the support that the international students receive from their families especially contributes to their psychological well-being in the host country, and facilitates the adaptation process. Similarly, Hosseini-Nezhad, Safdar and Nguyen Luu (2019), in their study examining the adaptation process of Iranian international students in Hungary, showed that the primary source of support for Iranian students is their families. They also drew attention to the decisive role of family support in the psychosocial adjustment of Iranian students by acting as a buffer against their negative psychological feelings. Culture, self, and behavior are interlinked (Kagitcibasi, 2005). According to Kagitcibasi (2005), the self-construal differs depending on the culture in which individuals grow up. Kagitcibasi (2005) mentioned the self-construal with orthogonal dimensions (interpersonal distance (separateness vs.

relatedness) and agency (autonomy vs. heteronomy)). The poles of these two dimensions are not opposite and can coexist, thus, four different self-construals emerge. Kagitcibasi emphasized the importance of having an autonomous-related self, which is the synthesis of autonomy and relatedness, because both autonomy and relatedness are two basic human needs. In her study, Kagitcibasi (2007) claimed that both the adjustment and psychological well-being of the children of families in which the autonomous-related self was developed, increased. In addition, the another study, in which university students from Turkey, the United States of America, Hong Kong and Sweden participated, revealed that young people value both being autonomous and having a close attachment with someone (Kagitcibasi, 2005, 2017).

Regarding social support from co-nationals, Sawir et al. (2007) showed that communicating with the co-nationals in a university setting plays an important role in reducing the experience of loneliness or isolation for international students. They suggest, however, that this may come at a cost, and emphasize the important role of involving local students in social support networks. Sullivan & Kashubeck-West (2015) found that having primary social connections with co-nationals can hinder adaptation to the host country, as it will negatively affect both language proficiency and learning about the host culture. They emphasized the effect of broad-based social support in reducing the acculturative stress on international students. Consistently, Matusitz (2015), in his study with French students in the United States, showed that those who experienced cultural stress were attached to their co-nationals and isolated themselves from both the locals and the American culture on the grounds that they could not establish a strong enough relationship with the local students.

Regarding social support from other internationals, Brown's (2009) ethnographic study, conducted with international postgraduate students regarding their adaptation experiences, was seen to be relevant. It showed that international students' perception of themselves as individuals in the host country with a common identity shared with other international students from different countries, was effective in making them feel more secure. This perceived shared identity also minimized the cultural shock of the support they received from other international students. According to Glass and Westmont (2014), having a strong multi-national social support can be a catalyst for international students to interact with locals by allowing them the confidence to explore a foreign culture. Additionally, in their study, Sullivan & Kashubeck-West (2015) drew attention to the fact that in minimizing the acculturative stress, besides both co-nationals and locals, inclusion of other international

students in social support networks is beneficial for the integration process of international students.

Regarding social support from the academic program, in their study with graduate students, Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) stated that international students' positive relationships with faculty members were associated with lower levels of stress symptoms. According to Roszik-Volovik and Nguyen Luu (2020), international students in Hungary expect to be taken care of and helped by the university staff. Also, Sawir et al. (2007) showed that international students feel lonely when they do not receive enough support from university staff for official procedures. Besides, Lewthwaite (1996) examined how international students adapt to their new environment in New Zealand and showed that positive relationships developed with caring, friendly, and mentoring instructors have a direct impact on international students' adaptation processes and increase their satisfaction with their cross-cultural experience.

Regarding social support from professionals, Mallinckrodt (1989) reported that students who received professional social support by participating in group therapies had significant improvements in their stress symptoms. Also, Sawir et al. (2007) stated that international students, who do not have close friends in the host country, applied to the counseling service in order to receive social support and that the help they received contributed to their psychological well-being. Although international students need psychological support to deal with the problems they face during their cross-cultural adaptation process, the literature suggests that they underuse mental health services (Mori, 2000; Tung, 2011). According to Mori (2000), among the biggest obstacles preventing students from making use of mental health services are the students' cultural values and cultural perceptions with respect to mental health. Therefore, international students' help-seeking behavior may be directed toward either a formal source (e.g., professional mental health care service providers such as counselors) or an informal social support network (e.g., family members, friends, and academic advisors) (Tung, 2011), since individuals have different attitudes toward seeking help and accepting support according to their cultural differences (Ishii et al., 2017; Mojaverian et al., 2013; Shavitt et al., 2016).

Studies on acculturation and cross-cultural adaptation of TIS

All previous studies on the adaptation and acculturation of TIS were conducted in the United States. Duru and Poyrazli (2011) indicated that TIS who reported higher levels of social connectedness, more years of study in the United States, and higher levels of English language competency, also reported lower levels of adjustment difficulties. An important

point in this study was that Turkish students with higher levels of perceived discrimination have a hard time in their new social environment and experience more adjustment difficulties. In another of their studies, Duru and Poyrazli (2007) demonstrated that higher levels of social connectedness and good English competency decreased acculturative stress and TIS who are more open to new experiences have a higher amount of contact with their host culture and lower levels of acculturative stress.

Additionally, Poyrazli et al. (2001) studied the adaptation problems of Turkish international students in the United States. According to their results, language proficiency and age of Turkish international students are two important predictive factors in the adaptation process. The younger students and those with better language skills were better adapted to the host country. Also, students with a higher grade point average were those with better language proficiency and older students. Besides, Burkholder (2014) examined Turkish international graduate students experiences in the United States. The results showed that the language barrier, being away from their families and Americans' misconceptions about Turks and prejudices against Islam negatively affected the lives of TIS, who evaluated their education in the United States as an opportunity for their personal growth.

Moreover, Kilinc and Granello (2003) examined life satisfaction of Turkish students in the United States. In this study, Turkish students reported a relatively high degree of satisfaction with their lives, while also reporting that a particular area of difficulty was homesickness which may be influenced by their perceived discrimination levels. In addition, Kilinc and Granello (2003) focus on an examination of help-seeking attitudes among TIS. According to their findings, 33% of the TIS who participated in their study preferred to seek help from mental health services in the United States, while 50% preferred to turn to a friend as a source of psychological help. In addition, 59% of the participants stated that their source of information about mental illness was the media. Furthermore, Bektas, Demir and Bowden (2009) researched psychological adaptation of TIS at US campuses. Findings indicated that, self-esteem and perceived social support from co-nationals during the adaptation process significantly contributed to psychological adaptation for the Turkish students in the United States.

In light of the theoretical framework of Ward and colleagues (2001; 2016) and the reviewed literature, in order to address international students' needs effectively, it is crucial to understand the impact and importance of cultural factors on their cross-cultural adaptation in different host societies because each country uniquely affects individuals. Accordingly, the adaptation process may differ according to host culture, but by better understanding the needs

of TIS as a specific cultural group, barriers in the adaptation process may be reduced. Knowledge about TIS' adaptation in different contexts may provide information leading to culturally relevant and useful services being provided to them by counselors and personnel working in the education sector. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the adaptation experiences of TIS in three different countries.

CHAPTER II

ADAPTATION EXPERIENCES OF TURKISH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN GERMANY

This study[1] aims to explore the adaptation experiences of TIS in Germany, taking into account the culture-specific (i.e., cultural values and affiliation to the Turkish minority group) and sojourner-specific (i.e., motivation for adaptation) conditions faced by them in Germany, and it fills a crucial gap in the literature by shifting the focus to TIS sojourning in Germany as a growing segment of German international higher education students. This study was informed by the literature that focuses on the adaptation of Turkish international students, Turks in Germany, and a theoretical framework developed by Ward and colleagues that describes sojourning as a dynamic process for students and local individuals (Ward et al., 2001). We addressed the following research questions:

1)   What are TIS' perceptions regarding Germany?

2)   What are the challenges in the adaptation process of TIS in Germany?

3)   What are the contributing factors to the adaptation process of TIS in Germany?

4)   What are the attitudes of TIS toward the college counseling services as a contributing factor in adaptation process?

Method

To explore adaptation experiences of TIS in Germany, we chose to use consensual qualitative research (CQR), which is a descriptive, inductive method (Hill, 2015). Hill (2015) emphasized that "this method is particularly good for investigating inner experiences that are not easily observable to outsiders" (p. 486). Essential to its use is the need to stay close to the participants' narratives and stories in order to fully understand the data (Hill, 2015). It is therefore well-suited to the in-depth and rich descriptions of psychological processes involved in this study and helps us to explore the phenomenon.

Sample

To reach the target sample, recruitment flyers including detailed information about the study were disseminated through social media groups consisting of Turkish people living in Germany. The sample size recommended by the CQR method is eight to 15 individuals (Hill,

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[1] Erturk**, S.,** Oker, K., & Nguyen Luu, L. A. (2022). "I am not an immigrant, I am an international student.": A qualitative study of adaptation experiences of Turkish international students in Germany. *Journal of International Students*, *12*(3), 716-735.

2015). This study was carried out with 15 volunteer TIS from different German universities, consisting of five individuals with a bachelor's degree, six with a master's degree, and four with a Ph.D. The individuals who participated in this study had been studying in Germany for a minimum of one year and a maximum of four years at the time of data collection. The participants' age (seven males and eight females) ranged from 20 to 30 years. All participants had spent their lives in Turkey until they moved to Germany for education. Additionally, four of the participants defined their German language proficiency as intermediate level and 11 as upper-intermediate.

Researchers

The research team for this study consisted of two social psychologists (one of them is Turkish) and two clinical psychologists (one of them is Turkish). Consistent with the CQR method, three researchers formed a primary team to obtain multiple perspectives and reach a consensus that made it possible to develop the best structure for all of the data. Besides, one of the researchers participated in the study as an auditor to review consensus decisions to secure that the primary team did not overlook important data and also to provide additional perspectives. The meanings of the data may be affected by the biases and expectations of individual researchers, and important nuances in the data may remain unnoticed (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997). The teamwork of several researchers in the CQR method helps to minimize these potential issues (Hill et al., 1997). Although bias in the CQR method is minimized due to teamwork, each study takes place in a certain cultural context, and each member develops a particular way of thinking about the data (Hill, 2015). As a whole team, we discussed and reported our biases and expectations regarding the potential findings of the study prior to data collection to reduce their impact on the data coding process. Also, all of us had experienced counseling with international students and were also familiar with the literature in the area of acculturation, adjustment and adaptation. Additionally, prior the study, we were trained on CQR method (e.g., reading CQR books, reviewing CQR articles).

Data Collection Tool

We created a data collection form to record information for each TIS, including their arrival time in the host country, age, gender, educational background, family background, language competence, etc., and, based on adaptation literature related to international students (e.g., Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Ward et al., 2001), a semi-structured interview protocol involving open-ended questions was prepared as is typical of the CQR method. Then, we applied a pilot study to two TIS in Germany, who were not involved in the study and based on their feedback, some of the interview questions were revised to make them more

understandable. After that, we re-organized the order of some questions and finalized the protocol, which included four question groups that focused on the following subjects: a) perceptions and feelings, b) challenges, problems, or stressors faced initially, later, and presently, c) Turkish versus German culture, and d) relationship networks, resources, and coping strategies.

Data Collection Process

Prior to the Skype interviews held at the volunteers' convenience, information and a consent form were sent to them via email, and, for consistency, all interviews were conducted by the same researcher. Depending on the participants' preference, the researcher, a native Turkish speaker, conducted the interviews in Turkish. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. Each interview lasted about 60 to 90 minutes, after which, the researcher wrote notes about the interviewee's impressions to provide further details and help interpret the results based on the data analysis. Additionally, while the interviewer referred to participants by name during interviews, neither their names nor any identifying features were used subsequently. The participants' names were replaced by codes, i.e., 01, 02… to 15 with the prefix 'G' for Germany. Therefore, cases are referred to by the codes G01, G02 etc. While transcribing, expressions such as "ahh" "hmm" were deleted as recommended by Hill and colleagues (1997). Two Turkish researchers translated all data into English, individually, then met to reach a consensus on the translations. Afterwards, a professional transcription service checked for clarity and error in them.

Analysis

Each step of the intensive and long data analysis process of CQR requires continuously examining the raw data to obtain multiple perspectives and reach a consensus on these multiple perspectives, and intra-team trust is essential in this process (Hill, 2015). Accordingly, we conducted a qualitative analysis that employed the procedure recommended by Hill (2015). First, the primary team examined the data independently and formed the domains, which are meaningful topics that arise from the content of the interviews (Hill, 2015). Second, the primary team came together to prepare an agreed list of domains. Third, the primary team determined the core ideas for each domain that were abstracted from the participants' responses in each case. Thus, we were able to reflect the essence of the participants' utterances and, working independently, demonstrate their meanings. The primary team then met again and continued discussion until consensus was reached. During objective elimination of the excess data, we paid thorough attention to the language usage of the participants to be able to convey their meanings precisely.

Audit

Several times, the auditor carefully read the domains and core ideas and provided feedback related to the sufficiency of the information. The team then made any consequent changes necessary within the domains and core ideas.

Cross-Analysis

The next step, following the work on individual cases, involved the primary team meeting to determine any similarities in the core ideas of each domain across all the cases and examine any patterns. These patterns were labelled as categories (Hill, 2015) and the team placed each core idea in its relevant category (or categories). The same individual who audited the domains and core ideas audited the cross-analysis and presented her feedback to the primary team a few times, resulting in the primary team reviewing the raw materials and making any necessary changes through several rounds of feedback. Then, we all came together again to establish an agreed and final version of all categories and, lastly, the categories were labelled as 'general', 'typical', or 'variant', depending on how often they had been noted.

Findings

This section is organized based on the results concerning each research question. First, an overview of the cross-analysis of the interviews with TIS is provided in Table 1 with the summary of domains, categories, and subcategories. Following Hill's (2015) criteria, case frequencies are nominated 'general', 'typical', or 'variant', as stated above. In the cross-analysis, general means applicable to 13-15 cases, typical means applicable for eight to 12 cases and variant means applicable for three to seven cases in our study. Cases applicable to only two were ignored because they were not deemed to be descriptive of the sample, as suggested by Hill (2015). As shown in Table 1, the analysis was performed under four domains based on these results and as Hill et al. (2005) recommends, at least one example for each category was chosen to be illustrated in the text. Accordingly, each research question is presented with a major theme capturing these domains.

Table 1

Summary of Domains, Categories, and Subcategories from the Cross-Analysis of the Interviews with Turkish International Students (N=15)

Domain, category, and subcategory	Frequency
Perceptions of Germany	
Cheapest but the best education system	General
Better job opportunities	Variant
Germany is a multicultural country	General
A safe and free country	General
Two different lives, on- and off-campus	Typical
Challenges	
Cold and cloudy weather	General
Language proficiency	General
Negative stereotypes	Typical
Germans consider all foreigners as immigrants	Typical
Germans stigmatize Turks as uneducated	Typical
Germans stigmatize Turks as conservative	Typical
Discrimination	Typical
Academic stress	Typical
Homesickness	Variant
Cultural distance	Typical
The contributing factors in the adaptation process	
Coping Strategies	
Acceptance	Typical
Focusing on the academic setting and avoidance of generalization	General
Problem-focused coping strategy	Typical
Sought social support from family and friends	Typical
Support system	
Supportive family	General
Supportive heterogenous peer network	General
Supportive school structure	General
Attitudes toward counselling services	
Negative attitudes towards counseling services	Variant
Having misperception about counseling services	Variant
Lack of information about counseling services	Typical

Note. General = applicable to all cases or all but two of the cases are considered; Typical = applicable to more than half of the cases; Variant = applicable to at least three (Hill, 2015).

Perceptions of Germany Domain

       According to data analysis, participants' general perception of Germany was largely positive at the levels of country and academic institution. Initially, participants generally believed that they receive the cheapest but the best education in Europe, which is their main motivation in Germany. For example, G01 reported:

> *My university is the best in Europe for my subject. There is no other country which offers free [no tuition fee] and such high-quality education with top-ranking universities.*

A variant category emerged from the data in this domain. According to participants' perceptions, Germany is a very developed country and offers job opportunities as well as a very prestigious degree that provides high-level job opportunities worldwide. G05 explained:

> *After graduation, I can find a top job anywhere in the world through having a highly prestigious German degree. My dream is to gain experience in a famous German company such as BMW or Mercedes and then return to Turkey.*

The participants noted that this perception led to the idea of continuing their lives in Germany or another developed country for a while after graduating from university.

Furthermore, participants typically acknowledged the intercultural opportunities to be gained from involvement with the various peoples, religions and cultures of Germany and its multicultural environment is potentially as important for their personal development as their formal education. In the words of G06:

> *People of all cultures, religions and races live here together. So, studying here is more than only having a degree, and it is an opportunity for intercultural experiences and getting to know the world better. I have improved my language, intercultural, interpersonal and communication skills that are necessary for my self-development and future business life.*

Besides, all of the participants stated they thought that Germany was a safe and free country, especially when compared with Turkey. In the words of G10:

> *I feel more secure and also free here. While expressing my opinions openly in Germany, I would hesitate to do so in Turkey due to social and political pressure. Also, I can walk the streets late at night, whereas this would not be possible in Turkey.*

Moreover, participants typically defined their experiences in academic settings differently to their experiences in societal settings. Therefore, they stated that their interpersonal relationships and reactions differed on- and off-campus. As G13 noted:

> *Campus culture is different to, and easier than the one outside. Some locals, especially older Germans, are not as flexible and open-minded as local students and university staff. Consequently, our relationships and communications with others may differ on- and off-campus. We spend most of our lives on-campus and while off campus, it is possible to be exposed to prejudice and discrimination.*

Accordingly, despite some negative experiences, especially off-campus, students developed a positive perception of Germany and did not report a negative perception that would demotivate them in the adaptation process.

Challenges Domain

According to data analysis, all participants reported more than one source of stress in their adaptation process. First, participants generally defined cold and cloudy weather as an important challenge that caused them to feel depressed. G02 reported:

> *There is no sunshine even in summer. It is so depressing and affects me so much. I feel like a zombie that is living in the dark.*

Also, all participants stated that the lack of language proficiency caused interpersonal problems with the language barrier affecting their social life more than academic life. As participants reported, they could not express themselves sufficiently, which caused superficiality or misunderstanding in their relationships. For example, in the words of G10:

> *Sometimes, I cannot correctly express exactly what I wanted to say due to my limited vocabulary. This makes my claims less significant. Also, I sometimes feel anxious as using the wrong words can cause problems.*

Moreover, participants typically reported that negative stereotyping about being Turks, Muslims and immigrants is a major source of stress in their daily life and therefore they are at a disadvantage compared to many other international students. Three subcategories emerged from this category: Firstly, participants typically mentioned that Germans considered all foreigners as immigrants. They emphasized that they were exposed to some negative stereotyping, not because of being Turkish but due to being foreign. For example, G07 said:

> *Germans do not think of foreigners as international students, that is the problem. I am not an immigrant; I am an international student and have come here for education. They get benefits from my being here but still prefer to be rude.*

Secondly, participants typically mentioned that Germans stigmatized Turks as uneducated, and the main reason is the first- and second-generation Turkish immigrants who live in Germany as workers. G05 noted:

> *Due to the first- and second-generation immigrants, Turks' reputation is not good here, even though there are some successful Turkish immigrants. All Turks are not as they are perceived to be. I am Turkish, but I am certainly not an uneducated migrant worker, as some of them have labelled me, but I still need to put more effort into building relations, because of existing*

prejudgments. Since I come from there, I try to introduce the modern side of Turkey. It is crucial to break down their biases by representing Turkey well.

Thirdly, participants typically stated that Germans stigmatized Turks as conservative. According to participants, there are two reasons for this stigma: existing conservative Muslim-Turks living in Germany and some Germans do not differentiate Turkish culture from Arabic culture, because of their having the same religious background. G08 reported:

While chatting with someone, he learned that I am Turkish. Then, his face changed, and he ask me some strange questions, such as 'Do you wear a burka in Turkey? How many wives does your father have?...' I tried to answer that not every Turk are Muslim or wears a scarf, and also Islam and Arab culture are different things, but he did not believe me.

Additionally, although emphasizing that they did not experience any discriminative attitude on-campus, participants typically mentioned that, due to being a foreigner or a Turk, they were exposed to discrimination off-campus, which was a challenge in their life in Germany. G07 said:

Once, an old guy asked me something and I could not answer. He yelled at me in German, like, 'if you cannot speak German do not come here, do not live here! This humiliation made me feel horrible.

Also, G15 stated:

I went to the dentist. She said that I needed a tooth filling. Instead of starting treatment, she made an appointment for a future date. When I went back for the appointment, she told me to get my treatment in Turkey.

Besides, participants typically indicated having academic stress due to the challenging education system that affected their life negatively. For example, G03 explained:

The German education system is very challenging. According to the rules, students who fail the same exam three times are expelled from the school. So, I have to study every day. Otherwise, I cannot pass.

Furthermore, a variant category emerged from the data in this domain. Participants explained that sometimes they felt homesick, especially in difficult times such as exam periods. G06 noted:

Occasionally, I am homesick. It is like a wave that comes and goes. I feel it when I am stressed, especially in the exam term, and have a problem.

However, most of the participants specified they did not feel homesick due to the geographical proximity between Germany and Turkey because they could easily go to Turkey whenever they wanted.

Lastly, participants typically expressed that they perceived large differences between Turkish and German cultures that cause challenges in interpersonal relationships with locals and make their adaptation harder. Accordingly, participants considered Germans as distant in relationships, superficial and polite, as a result of German culture. For example, G04 noted:

> *Germans are cold but nice. You need to pay attention to their personal space and avoid touching them, and do not talk about your private lives. Compared to Turks, they prefer such superficial relationships that are far from sincere.*

Also, G12 reported:

> *We are too different from Germans. They are so individualistic, and hospitality is completely different. For example, they do not offer any food or drink when you visit them.*

The contributing Factors in the Adaptation Process Domain

Participants mentioned the coping strategies and resources they applied in dealing with problems relating to their adaptation process in Germany. The first category under this domain is coping strategies as representative of participants' responses and the strategies they used in managing difficulties, as well as enhancing intercultural interactions and reducing the stress associated with such contact. Four subcategories stemmed from this category: Firstly, participants typically defined acceptance as a 'means of coping' strategy. They respected and accepted the German culture and values. Acceptance facilitated their cultural learning and consequently their adaptation. G09 stated:

> *I accept that Germany is my home for as long as I stay here and that makes everything easier. After accepting, I improved my language and got involved with the locals.*

Also, G12 said:

> *I kept pace with the Germans and their culture. I accept people as they are. The world does not just consist of Turks. This makes everything easier.*

Secondly, participants generally considered negative experiences to be the exception and avoided generalizing as a coping strategy and focused on the academic setting instead. As G01 reported:

> *Some individual things can happen off-campus such as at the supermarket. They see your name on the credit card and they do not behave very nicely. I*

cannot generalize because I never experienced such things in an academic

setting and it is not always the case, but it does happen.

Thirdly, participants typically stated that they tried to overcome problems by dealing with stressors directly. As G10 explained:

At first, I lived in a suburb. This part of the city was not good and was far from the

campus. It was a disappointment for me. So, I said, 'whenever you turn from loss,

there is gain' and I relocated.

Furthermore, all interviewees either participated in a German language school or attended extracurricular German language classes in order to solve the language barrier problem, quickly. Namely, most of the participants indicated that when they identified the source of their problems, they took action directly without any delay to solve them. Fourthly, participants typically noted that they sought social support from friends and family to cope with their adaptation problems in Germany. G09 reported:

I call my parents when I miss home or feel lonely.

The second category under this domain is the support system. It describes relations with others and opportunities for reducing stress and for facilitating the adaptation process of participants on- and off-campus. In this context, three subcategories were examined separately:

Firstly, results showed that participants generally had strong family bonds and their family supported them financially and emotionally in the adaptation process. G11 stated:

Apart from my financial needs, my family also supports me emotionally. They

understand me best. Sometimes just hearing their voices is enough to improve my

mood.

 Secondly, participants mentioned that they have a supportive heterogeneous peer network, including co-nationals, other internationals, and locals. Depending on the nature of the stress, they get support from different groups to cope with different types of challenges they face during their adaptation process. Also, most of them indicated that their best friend is Turkish. In the words of G13:

I have a relationship with everyone but sharing emotional issues with my

best Turkish friend is easier due to the common culture and language. Local

friends, however, know everything and support me in both academic and

daily life, especially in improving my German language proficiency.

Therefore, I try to chat with them as much as possible. Also, as we face

similar challenges in Germany, we are in strong solidarity with other

internationals and, through them, I learn about different cultures.

Thirdly, the results showed that participants generally considered themselves to have a supportive school structure that contributed to their adaptation and motivated participants' integration by means of a friendly atmosphere and social facilities. For example, G08 stated:

I can say that the staffs at university are well-organized. They are very sensitive and

feel an obligation to help international students in their integration. In the classroom,

professors are helpful and motivate you to be interactive.

Also, participants described supportive school facilities that increase interaction among students during the adaptation process. G14 noted:

Library is real life here. Sometimes, I only go to the library to socialize and

avoid feeling alone. Also, there is a lunch culture here. We always have

lunch, all of us together. Besides, the school organizes free events, and

everyone is invited.

Attitudes Toward Counselling Services Domain

This domain defines participants' perceptions and attitudes toward getting professional counseling support or use of mental health services to cope with stress and problems in the adaptation process. A variant category showed that half of the participants were not completely open to the counseling services for getting psychological support to deal with stressors. For example, G07 indicated:

When I need it, my family or friends, who know and understand me best, immediately

support me. The counselor is only a last resort.

Another variant category stemming from this domain indicated that participants had inaccurate information about using professional counseling services for psychological support associated with adaptation. For example, G04 reported:

I have not experienced a problem serious enough to go to the counselor.

Additionally, participants typically did not have enough information about school counseling services. G08 noted:

I remember when I started university, I received an email about the counseling

service. But I cannot remember anything about it.

Also, G15 stated:

I have no idea about it. Maybe there is not a counseling service at the university.

Because I have not heard about one from others, either.

Overall, the results showed that counseling services or any other mental health intervention services were not a part of the adaptation process of the TIS who participated in this study. Additionally, participants did not have any awareness about the possible consequences of adaptation challenges.

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the adaptation experiences of TIS sojourners in Germany and it contributes to adaptation literature as it focuses on defining themes related to TIS, a particular nationality-cultural group that has not been studied in the context of Germany. According to the study's findings, various issues affected the adaptation of TIS, including their perceptions of Germany, the unique challenges they faced, contributing factors to the adaptation process (social support networks, strategies for coping with adaptation problems) and attitudes of TIS toward counseling services in the process.

The findings of this study showed that TIS' perceptions of German universities differ from their perceptions of Germany itself. According to Ward and Geeraert (2016), different contexts, including institutional and societal, affect the adaptation process, and a supportive school environment can be important and effective in motivating students to have a positive attitude toward the host country. The participants' motives for adaptation focused foremost on the academic context, depending on their sojourner status and migration goals. They defined Germany as a country that contributes to their self-development with its multicultural structure, and its attitudes to safety and freedom. However, participants believed that Germany not only offers them free and high-quality education but also high-level job opportunities. These positive perceptions increased TIS' motivation for their stay in Germany (e.g., Suoglu, 2012). Similarly, Burkholder (2014) showed that a prestigious American degree and possible job opportunities are essential motivational factors for TIS in the United States.

Additionally, the challenges experienced by TIS in Germany during the adaptation process are in line with previous studies on the adaptation difficulties of Turkish international students in the United States (e.g., Burkholder, 2014; Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Kilinc & Granello, 2003) as well as other international student groups in Germany (e.g., Yu & Wang, 2011). In this study, however, findings showed that TIS are exposed to many negative stereotypes owing to being Turkish, Muslim and foreigner and accordingly they reported themselves to be more disadvantaged than many other international student groups in Germany. Due to longstanding social and political turmoil, Turks have been stereotyped as being in a lower class, conditioned by Islam, monochrome (Horrocks & Kolinsky, 1996), oppressive, inferior, and backward (Erensu & Adanli, 2004). Participants, aware of the out-

group homogeneity perception of Germans, do not accept to be stigmatized or to be generalized with a low reputation. TIS, culturally belonging to the Turkish minority group in Germany, perceive negative stigmas as a threat to their social identity and consider themselves to be representatives of a modern aspect of Turkey. Consequently, they make more effort when dealing with German friends and try to break their prejudices. Also, TIS consider themselves to have higher status than immigrants, and the study's findings suggest that they believe being an international student (sojourner) is a sign, in itself, that they are well educated with a financially stable background.

Moreover, TIS in Germany experienced discrimination, but only off-campus. This finding supports the results of a study conducted by Hanassab (2006) reported that international students in the United States were exposed to discrimination more frequently off-campus, spanning from covert interactions to overt acts. This kind of experience demotivates international students from establishing friendships with locals (Mori, 2000). Similarly, Yu and Wang (2011) stated that Chinese international students were rejected by the Germans due to prejudice and discrimination, causing them to separate from the locals. This study, however, shows that TIS perceptions differentiate between host culture members on- and off-campus. Increased off-campus negative experiences, particularly stereotyping and discrimination, contributed to TIS' motivation to focus more on the academic context and the young locals whom TIS identified as open-minded. According to our findings, TIS perceived that the border between themselves and their German peers was not impermeable (e.g., Tajfel, 1978). Through the positive campus atmosphere and sojourn motivation, TIS continued to maintain and leverage relationships with locals to develop their language, and intercultural communication skills and provide practical information. Howbeit, acculturative stressors such as prejudice, discrimination and academic challenges, especially in exam terms, caused TIS to continue to experience adaptation problems such as homesickness. Similarly, Duru and Poyrazli (2011) and Kilinc and Granello (2003) mentioned that perceived discrimination brings about additional adjustment challenges for TIS in the United States.

The findings of this study indicated that TIS in Germany used several coping strategies to deal with the challenges and also to facilitate their adaptation process. Ward et al. (2001) claimed that problem-focused coping during adaptation is the best strategy for international students and TIS in Germany preferred coping directly with their challenges and stressors such as by learning the German language. The effort towards language learning is a key factor that increases their motivation to communicate with locals in the adaptation process (e.g., Burkholder, 2014; Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). In addition, Nakamura and Orth (2005)

stated that active acceptance was an adaptive response when an individual was challenged by unchanging situations, which is consistent with the results of this study. Also, the purpose of TIS' moving to Germany and their experiences, mostly off-campus, has led students to highlight their international student identity and focus more on the academic context, self-development and motivation. Thus, they avoided generalizing their negative experiences, which contributed to the reduction of cultural stress, the perception of out-group heterogeneity and their gaining of a positive perception of Germany.

Besides coping strategies, social support contributed to the reduction of TIS' stress during adaptation to their new environment. Bender et al. (2019) showed that having multiple sources of social support is associated with getting the most positive outcomes from the adaptation. Consistently, participants in this study reported having positive and supportive networks within their family and heterogenous peer groups including locals, co-nationals and other internationals. In line with their academic, social and practical needs, TIS established multiple sources of social support and they sought help from these sources as and when necessary. However, the main source of emotional support for TIS in Germany is their family members and co-national friends, due to language, familiarity and cultural background. The literature highlights that family support increases cultural integration and decreases stress (Bertram et al., 2014). The findings of this study support previous results of TIS-related research (e.g., Bektas, Demir & Bowden 2009; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007, 2011) where they mentioned the importance of co-national support in the adjustment of TIS.

Additionally, The results of this study showed that TIS remain unaware of the existence or functioning of the counseling services at their universities. Underutilization of counseling services in the adaptation process of international students has been widely mentioned in the literature (Mori, 2000). Consistently, participants did not seek professional support when addressing their adaptation challenges. Participants had the perception that counseling services were only for serious mental problems (e.g., Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Yet, those who report a negative attitude towards counseling services, considering them to be a last resort, are not completely closed to the idea of using them. Additionally, the literature highlights that concern about negative stigma is an important reason for international students' underutilization of counseling services (e.g., Mori, 2000). Throughout the interviews in this study however, participants did not report any concerns about stigma regarding the use of counseling services. Our findings are in line with previous studies on utilization of counseling services of Turkish students in Turkey (e.g., Topkaya, Vogel & Brenner, 2017) and international students including TIS (e.g., Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Mori, 2000).

CHAPTER III

ADAPTATION OF TURKISH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HUNGARY AND THE UNITED STATES

Understanding the cross-cultural adaptation of TIS in different host societies is important because each country uniquely affects individuals. Therefore, this study[2] aims to investigate the adaptation experiences of TIS in Hungary and the United States. It was informed by the theoretical framework developed by Ward and colleagues (2001; 2016) and correspondingly, we addressed the following research question:

What are the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of TIS in the two different countries, Hungary and the United States?

Method

To examine the adaptation experiences of TIS in two different countries, this qualitative study adopted a case study approach which is used to "contribute to our knowledge of the individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (Yin, 2014, p. 4). Namely, a 'case' can be a person, a group, or a phenomenon (Yin, 2012). In this study, we define the case as the adaptation experiences of TIS and aimed to understand their adaptation in two different countries. The comparative case study approach allows an in-depth description of each case as well as identification of the commonalities and differences between cases (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Therefore, this approach allowed us the opportunity to examine TIS' cross-cultural experiences in depth, considering Hungary and the United States. Thus, this comparative case study may contribute to the studies on specific cultural groups and minimize confounding of a particular student group's characteristics with those of host society in the literature. Therefore, the cross-cultural transition of international students may be understood more systematically.

Participants

We recruited the target sample by distributing recruitment flyers, detailing information about the study, through social media groups. A total of 26 volunteer TIS (14 from Hungary and 12 the United States) participated in the study with their age ranging from 21 to 35 years. All participants were Turkish-born and had moved from Turkey to the host country, unmarried, for the purpose of their higher education. The demographic characteristics of

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[2] Erturk, **S**., & Nguyen Luu, L. A. (2022). Adaptation of Turkish international students in Hungary and the United States: A comparative case study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *86*, 1-13.

participants are presented below. Participants' names were kept confidential following the interviews, and we used different numbers prefixed by their host country's initials to represent them (see Table 1).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=26; Hungary=14, the US=12)

	Length of residence	Sex	Age	Marital status	Enrolled Degree
H01	6 years	F	30	Single	Ph.D.
H02	8 years	F	27	Single	M.D.
H03	6 years	F	26	Married to a local for 2 years	Bachelor
H04	6 years	M	28	Single	Bachelor
H05	6 years	F	25	Single	Bachelor
H06	8 years	F	26	Single	Master
H07	2 years	M	28	Single	Master
H08	5 years	F	24	Single	Bachelor
H09	1 years	M	21	Single	Bachelor
H10	3 years	M	22	Single	Bachelor
H11	2 years	M	21	Single	Bachelor
H12	3 years	M	27	Single	Ph.D.
H13	1 year	F	27	Single	Ph.D.
H14	1 year	M	25	Single	Master
U01	7 years	F	31	Single	Ph.D.
U02	3 years	F	21	Single	Bachelor
U03	7 years	F	33	Single	Ph.D.
U04	3 years	M	28	Single	Master
U05	4 years	F	28	Married to a co-national for 3 months	Master

U06	3 years	F	29	Married to an international for a year	Ph.D.
U07	4 years	M	26	Single	Master
U08	4 years	F	35	Single	Ph.D.
U09	1 year	M	21	Single	Bachelor
U10	3 years	F	27	Single	Master
U11	4 years	M	30	Single	Master
U12	7 years	M	31	Single	Ph.D.

Data Tools

We developed a basic data sheet to record demographic information of TIS (e.g., age, educational background, length of residence in the host country, language competence) and a semi-structured interview protocol based on existing literature on the adaptation of international students (e.g., Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Ward et al., 2001). Some of the interview questions are as follows: "Could you tell me about your school life?" "How do you manage everyday life?" "Have you faced any daily life hassles in the host country?"

Procedures

Interviews were conducted with United States based TIS, via Skype. Information sheets and consent forms were emailed to participants prior to interview. Participants in the Hungary group had face-to-face interviews at locations of their choosing. Each interview lasted 60–90 minutes and was digitally audio-recorded with the participants' consent, then stored with dates. The interviews were conducted in Turkish so the participants could express themselves comfortably in their native language. However, some participants spontaneously answered some questions in English, and we left these expressions in their original form. Additionally, memos containing observations, ideas, and intuitions about participants' expressions for each interview session were reported in writing. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a professional transcription service was used to translate Turkish to English. Once this was completed, all transcriptions were checked, and then reviewed by the authors and the professional transcriber to reach a consensus on the translations.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, as it is useful in highlighting similarities and differences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In fact, it is an essential method that presents the

experiences and meanings expressed by participants through their own lens (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, it provides us the opportunity to present TIS' adaptation relevant to the host country. The data collected from each group was analyzed separately using an analytical procedure comprising six phases. First, we became familiar with the data. Subsequently, we generated initial codes. Then, we organized the codes to develop and define themes. Thereafter, we reviewed the initial themes and checked the context in detail to reveal patterns. Following this, we reached a consensus about the story, and themes' definitions. Later, we compared the themes of the two groups and gathered them under four common categories. Finally, the analysis report was written with direct quotes from interviews.

Findings

This part of the study presents the analysis of the students' descriptions of their adaptation experiences. To reach an in-depth understanding of them, the study's findings were analyzed and presented separately with reference to the United States and Hungary contexts. We found four categories: (1) Experiences in academic setting, (2) Interaction with others in the host country, (3) Everyday matters in the host country, and (4) Political reflections in the host country.

Category 1: Experiences in Academic Setting

This category represents the academic experiences of participants in the United States and Hungary that have influenced their adaptation process in terms of the institutional context.

The United States

Overall, the academic opportunities afforded by the US universities on the campus setting fulfilled participants' expectations. There are three themes under this category for participants in the United States: idealized school facilities, school as a place to belong: social opportunities and relationships, and challenges.

Idealized School Facilities

The participants reported a strong sense of abundant facilities at US universities, as well as the necessary physical, technological, and written resources for their research. Participants emphasized the role of the facilities offered to them in the learning process:

> *As I expected, we have all academic facilities. We learn by experiencing the knowledge through unlimited access to all resources, an interactive education system where different perspectives are respected and encouraged, high-tech labs etc.* (U02)

As well as praising the materialistic conditions of US universities, as typified in the above quote, many appreciated the opportunities provided by the environment. For example,

interactive education, experiential learning, creative freedom in practices such as experimenting. Thus, the participants in the United States took an active place at the center of the educational processes. Institutional facilities offered to the participants ensured that their academic expectations were met. Thus, it positively affected their academic motivation, perceptions of their academic environment, and school engagement. Consequently, participants' satisfaction with their experience abroad has increased, and this contributed to their psychological adaptation process.

School as a Place to belong: Social Opportunities and Relationships

All participants reported that their universities provide many opportunities to build social contact such as extracurricular activities, sport teams, etc. Participants highlighted these opportunities as supportive of their abilities and social skills:

Organizations to which all students are invited are frequently organized at the university. There are also many clubs. I play the violin and I am a member of the music club. (U04)

Social opportunities positively affected students' perceptions of their academic setting and enabled them to consider their university as an environment where they not only receive high quality academic education, but can also practice their hobbies, socialize and connect through different group memberships and activities. Thus, the necessary environment for the participants to constitute a social support network that could facilitate their psychological adaptation, and the means to acquire competencies to facilitate their sociocultural adaptation, were both provided in the institutional context.

Participants emphasized their satisfaction with the relationships they formed with professors and other students. They believed that a free, respectful, and supportive atmosphere exists in the academic setting:

My advisor is like my second mother. She is so nice and tries to protect and encourage me... (U01)

American universities bring people from all over the world together on a campus. We are all here for the same purpose and have academic, social and cultural exchange and solidarity with each other. (U12)

Cultural contact with various groups, solidarity and supportive environment contributed to the participants' confidence, academic motivation, sociocultural competencies and perception, as they were socially accepted. Perceived social support from instructors and friends promoted participants' positive attachment and attitudes towards the United States. As

a result, positive relations in the institutional context facilitated both the psychological and sociocultural adaptation process of the participants.

Challenges

Challenges in the academic setting were deemed inevitable. Two sub-themes emerged regarding these challenges: academic competition and discrimination.

First, all participants emphasized the effects of the competitive education system in their academic experience:

> *This is a competitive school. So, we prefer to sacrifice our social life and work [to be successful] most of our time. Sometimes I forget to eat and sleep when studying.* (U05)

Study overload hindered the psychological adjustment of the participants by negatively affecting their general well-being. The resultant restrictions on their social lives also added to their already intense stress.

Second, participants talked about the relative deprivation and discrimination they endured in their academic life. Oftentimes, the reason is not specific to their ethnicity or religion group membership, but rather their being a foreigner:

> *Only American citizens can take part in some projects. So I cannot take part in them. This is discrimination!* (U10)

The experience of discrimination due to being an international student hindered participants' psychological adaptation process by causing them to feel anger and see themselves rejected and more disadvantaged than local students.

Hungary

Overall, participants in Hungary faced many challenges that hindered their adaptation process in their academic setting. There are two themes under this category for participants in Hungary: interaction with university staff and challenges.

Friendly University Staff

Participants spoke about their academic experiences compared to similar experiences in Turkey. They reported satisfaction with their relations with the university staff:

> *Our instructors are kinder and less egotistical than their Turkish counterparts. Frankly, all university staff, including officers, are kind.* (H02)

The looser norms, non-authoritarian school climate, the lower power distance between academic staff and students compared to their relations with staff in Turkey contributed to the participants' development of a more positive perception of school staff in Hungary. The attitudes and behaviors of university staff contributed to students' perceptions of mutual respect and social acceptance in the academic setting. This enabled participants to feel

supported in facing institutional challenges and their psychological adaptation was thus facilitated.

Still, Challenges of Belonging

Despite warm relationships with school staff, participants experienced challenges and practical difficulties in their academic setting. Two sub-themes emerged: limited facilities and language barrier.

First, participants emphasized the role of school facilities in their academic experience as follows:

> *Physically, universities are a single building in the city without garden. Also, facilities such as library, or laboratory are limited and their condition is not good. If there is a lesson, we go to school. Apart from that, we do not have much to do with the school.* (H12)

Participants were educated in a single building without surrounding points of interest. Therefore, there was no physical or symbolic space to promote adaptation. In fact, with the absence of societies, social circles, and other elements of student life, the lessons themselves were the only social provision in the academic environment. Thus, limited facilities failed to meet participants' needs. Their perception of school and attachment to it, their academic motivation, and psychological adaptation were all adversely affected along with their actual studies.

Second, participants mentioned the negative impact of a language barrier in various aspects of school life:

> *Some instructors' English is not good enough. We need more explanation about some topics in the classroom, but they cannot answer our questions because of not speaking English well, not due to lack of knowledge.* (H08)
>
> *Hungarians have a better education than internationals. I have to admit that I do not have any practice in my field. It is like studying medicine without going to hospital. Hungarians have all the chances to make it practical.* (H10)
>
> *My professor teaches according to the Hungarian book he wrote. This book has no English version. While Hungarian students can follow and study in detail from the book, we cannot learn enough and pass that lesson. This is unfair!* (H02)

The participants, who valued the quality of their education, came to Hungary for better education by paying a considerable education fee. However, sometimes not getting answers to questions due to the instructors' language barrier caused the participants to perceive themselves as a "thing" in the classroom or someone who was not there. In addition, the

participants felt that they were more disadvantaged than local students because they could not benefit from opportunities such as applied study and internship due to the lack of local language knowledge. These difficulties caused the participants to rate themselves as financial commodities rather than learners. Students who compared themselves to locals who received quality education for free had the expectation that they would have at least the same opportunities as locals for the tuition fee they paid. In addition, the situation of "education in Europe/having an EU degree", which the students had previously developed, aroused the perception that they would have better education quality and opportunities than in Turkey. However, limited school facilities, not being able to get answers even to their ordinary questions in the course, and the difficulties they experienced in order to learn/succeed aroused the feeling and thought in students that their university was a business for foreign students rather than education. Participants whose experience did not match their expectations were disappointed financially and psychologically. As a result, the students' emotional detachment that emerged regarding the educational environment hindered their psychological adjustment processes.

Furthermore, participants highlighted the separation between Hungarian and international students, due to both language barrier and organizational processes within the universities:

> *We are not in the same classrooms and there is no social interaction with Hungarians. Interestingly, our school does nothing to organize any activity aimed at improving relations between students.* (H03)

> *Sometimes, Hungarians join the English courses. Hungarians prefer to chat among themselves. The reason for their lack of interaction could be Hungarians' lack of English proficiency.* (H14)

There was no interaction between students in the academic setting as Hungarians study in their own language while international students study in English. Furthermore, a language barrier between them existed beyond the classroom. The lack of interaction made it difficult for participants to learn the host culture and acquire new competencies to adapt to the new environment, and therefore their sociocultural adaptation was hindered. Also, participants who expected more contact with local students did not receive sufficient social support from the locals, and did not consider themselves a natural part of the school. The school's lack of culturally sensitive practices to eliminate discrimination between students contributes to "emotional detachment" in perception much more than physical separation. Thus, participants' psychological adaptation process was hindered.

Category 2: Interaction with Others in the Host Country

This category represents the participants' experiences in the social environment context with others (locals, co-nationals, and other internationals) that is, their social relations, which affect their adaptation in the United States and Hungary.

The United States

Overall, participants in the United States had heterogenous peer relationships with locals, co-nationals, and other internationals. Three themes emerged under this category for participants in the United States: locals, co-nationals, and other internationals.

Mixed Experience with Culturally Distant Locals

The most prominent point for the participants, who evaluate their relationships with locals by comparing them to Turks, is the large cultural differences perceived. Primarily, participants highlighted the perceived differences positively:

> *The world is not made up of Turks and this is a multicultural society. Living with differences requires respect and open-mindedness. Unlike Turks, Americans care about politeness and do not judge you. They never comment on other people's opinions or behaviors even if they disagree* (U08)

> *You need to be careful about personal distance. I mean you cannot touch people, you cannot talk about private lives, you cannot even take people's time [e.g., occupying 4-5 hours of the host with a long stay by saying that I will come for a coffee in Turkey]. Americans know their limits and they do not meddle in everything like Turks do.* (U05)

It is understood that the differences experienced, enhanced participants' cultural knowledge and awareness. Participants had the opportunity to reason about their own culture and past experiences through their new experiences in the host country. Thus, the comfort provided by some differences in the host culture has also affected their perceptions regarding their own cultures, experiences and habits by re-evaluating. Also, they perceived the positively attributed differences in their relationships were a result of multiculturalism. Although the perceived high cultural distance hindered the participants' sociocultural adaptation, the perception they developed facilitated their adaptation processes. They did not feel a risk of constant judgement or being subjected to the opinions of other people. Consequently, a lack of apprehension concerning criticism was the most positive experience.

On the other hand, the participants emphasized the role of perceived cultural differences negatively in their relations with locals:

> *Turks are my emotional supporters because I sometimes want to hug someone and share my happiness or cry and relax. Such sincere behaviors are unacceptable to the*

locals. Also, people are individual and solitary with no sense of social solidarity or neighborliness etc. This sometimes bothers me. We are culturally too different. (U07)

It is understood that bodily contact and direct expression of emotions in their relationships is an important determinant for the participants, but the large personal distance initiated by the Americans hindered them from establishing deep relationships with the locals. This factor encouraged participants to choose Turks as their source of emotional support. Furthermore, social solidarity or neighborliness means collective and close relations for the participants and contributes to their emotional satisfaction, but in its absence, psychological adaptation of US participants was negatively affected.

Supporting Co-nationals

Participants contacted co-nationals in the United States through social media, Turkish friends, or Assembly of Turkish Student Associations (ATSA). They are all active members of ATSA at their universities and cited that this especially provided the opportunity to meet and communicate with co-nationals:

When I first arrived, I met Turks through ATSA and they helped me in terms of initial transition. Also, I met my best friend at an ATSA organization. (U01)

The associations facilitate psychological adaptation by contributing to solidarity within the group and by allowing TIS to maintain some cultural habits through the activities they organized. All this helps build a social network that gives support and belonging.

Satisfying Relations with Other Internationals

One factor that made the United States the most attractive for the participants was the opportunity to communicate within a multicultural society. Participants highlighted the international students' impact on their experiences:

Relations with other internationals teach us a new worldview and being an international person. This is a personal growth opportunity that cannot be learned from anywhere. So whenever I find the opportunity, I attend events organized by student associations. (U09)

For the participants, contact with individuals from different cultures means personal growth in ways such as broadening their vision and improving their communication skills. Also, they believe that these relations will create a network for them in their future business life. In this context, students are satisfied with the cultural diversity and the opportunities to interact with individuals from different cultures in the United States. Again, it can be seen that activities organized by associations or other entities are highly valued and facilitate the sociocultural adaptation process.

Hungary

Overall, participants in Hungary reported satisfaction with their social contacts even though language barrier restricted their relations with the local community. There are three themes under this category for participants in Hungary: locals, co-nationals, and other internationals.

Mixed Experience with Locals

First, participants emphasized the feeling of separation from locals who are non-English speakers:

> *We only have relationships with Hungarians who can speak English and separation from non-English speakers.* (H13)

The social restrictions and separations caused by the language barrier resulted in participants' expectations not being fully met regarding social life in Hungary. The limited interaction and social environment made their life harder and hindered both psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Nevertheless, all participants emphasized that they are similar to Hungarians:

> *I expected that life here will be harder. But, I realized that we have the same behaviors, attitudes, traditions and habits etc. It is not exactly the same, but similar. I feel like we are kind of relatives.* (H09)

Perhaps because of a common historical background, the participants perceived low cultural distance between Turks and Hungarians, which made them feel closer to the locals and facilitated their sociocultural and psychological adaptation processes. However, participants also noted the perceived differences in relationships with Hungarians:

> *Hungarians are more collectivistic and similar to us than other Europeans. Yet compared to Turks, they are more individualistic and have higher personal distance, which makes relationships superficial. However, this difference is sometimes good because Turks are physically very intimate and have ideas about others' lives.* (H01)

For the participants, similarly to the TIS experiences in the United States, individuality and personal distance in relationships mean respect for private life and not being intimate physically. These cultural factors lead to participants' satisfaction in relationships, but a feeling of superficiality reduced the satisfaction of their interpersonal relationships with locals. Consequently, perceived cultural differences in relationships facilitated the participants' psychological adaptation process as well as hindered it.

Besides, some participants emphasized that they faced discrimination in their relationships with Hungarians, not because they were Turks but because they were foreigners:

Occasionally, we [internationals] experience discrimination at shopping places, and the immigration office. Even if they speak English well, most Hungarians do not like foreigners. (H11)

Participants who communicated only with English speakers experienced discriminative attitudes and a feeling of separation from locals, thus provoking stress and a consequent reduction in motivation to relate to the local population. Difficulties arose in both the sociocultural and psychological adaptation process of the participants, whose expectations for effective communication with locals were not met.

Supportive Co-nationals

All participants stated that they communicate easily with other Turks in Hungary and there is strong solidarity between them:

There is an unwritten rule: Turk finds the Turk. Somehow we can easily reach each other, by Turkish restaurants, social media etc. (H06)

We are few in number and most of us are sojourners. This brings us closer to each other. (H13)

Social media or Turkish businesses in their cities were common meeting points for participants. Their limited numbers positively affected the solidarity between them and they established supportive relationships. Ease of contact between Turks and their solidarity-based relationships facilitated the participants' psychological adaptation process.

Solidarity with Other internationals

Participants noted their relationship with large number of internationals living in Hungary and the impact on the adaptation process:

Internationals are all survive together in Hungary. Therefore, we have close and supportive relationships. So, I gained a perspective from the world, not only from one local community. (H03)

Because of many shared experiences in Hungarian society, particularly separation in the academic setting and limited relations with locals, participants connected well with internationals. Thus, they developed a social support network that facilitated their psychological adaptation process. Moreover, learning different cultures from internationals and experiencing different perspectives increased the cultural awareness of the participants and contributed to their sociocultural adaptation.

Category 3: Everyday Matters in the Host Country

This category represents the participants' experiences with everyday matters affecting the adaptation process, focusing on social and physical environment factors in the United States and Hungary.

The US

Overall, participants in the United States highlighted that it is not only very different from Turkey, but differences exist within the United States itself. Participants described the United States as "a land of contrasts, not just differences" due to its social and physical environmental features. There are two themes under this category for participants in the United States: contrasts and restricted relationships with family.

Contrasts

First, participants noted the impact of climate on their lives:

I studied for my MA in the North. It was very cold and I could not get out of the flat. It made me feel depressed. So, I moved to the South for my Ph.D. Now I have to deal with allergies due to humid heat. (U11)

Different climate conditions limited the participants' social life and caused health problems. Thus, climate hindered their psychological and sociocultural adaptation process. Additionally, participants pointed to their university's location affecting their lives:

Daily life is very different from Turkey and can be challenging. While studying at a semi-urban university, life was isolated, and limited to the campus. We were challenged by the lack of public transportation and non-fast food etc. So I switched to a city university. Now it is the opposite. I am isolated from the existing social life by the cost of city-living. (U10)

We cannot define America as a safe country because there are differences between regions. The area I used to live in was a little unsettling, but I do not even lock my car where I live now. (U02)

Participants' experiences and challenges in everyday life differed depending on university location in the United States. In addition, large differences in daily life between the home and host country necessitated greater life changes in the participants' intercultural transition. The differences that contributed to the participants' perception of high cultural distance and the challenges in their daily lives increased the acculturative stress. Accordingly, the psychological and sociocultural adaptation processes of the participants were adversely affected.

Restricted Relationships with Family

All participants emphasized that their families are the main source of emotional support for them, and they have strong bonds. They explained how the geographical distance between the United States and Turkey affected their lives:

Time difference is a big problem. I cannot talk to my family when I want. (U07)

My grandfather passed away. I could not go to Turkey for the funeral, because arriving to my city from here takes about 24 hours. I felt lost and horrible. (U06)

By moving to the United States, participants' source of social support decreased significantly, with geographical distance restricting family communications. The time difference between the two countries was also a cause of stress as participants were unable to call home at will. Furthermore, participants' lack of ability to visit family even in an emergency was another stressful factor. This situation complicated their psychological adaptation process.

Hungary

Overall, participants reported that there were no big changes in their daily life and daily life in Hungary was easier than in Turkey. There are three themes under this category for participants in Hungary: urban facilities, challenges, and family relationships.

Urban Facilities

Participants emphasized that "everything and everywhere was accessible" in their daily lives because of Hungary's urban facilities:

By 24/7 transportation facilities, people go everywhere, any time... Many meeting places are open until morning and are affordable. (H04)

As a woman, I feel more equal, free and safe here. I miss my easier and lively life here when I am in Turkey. (H05)

The facilities on offer in the city easily met the students' daily needs. This facilitated the sociocultural adaptation process and increased participants' overall satisfaction with Hungarian. Also, in daily life, both social and physical environmental factors made Hungary more attractive than Turkey and thus the participants created the "emotional attachment" necessary for the psychological adaptation process.

Moreover, participants emphasized that the shared historical background between the two countries was reflected in their daily lives in Hungary:

I have a Hungarian friend with the same name as me. I can find Turkish food in a Hungarian restaurant. We go to the Turkish bath on weekends. We celebrate the Turkic festival. I feel like I am at home. (H06)

Due to shared historical background, the common cultural factors experienced by the participants in their daily lives allowed them to continue their traditional habits. Also, it contributed to their perception of low cultural distance. These commonalities provided comfort in the participants' lives and they did not experience great life changes in their intercultural transition. Thus, participants' sociocultural adaptation processes were facilitated.

Challenges

Some participants experienced challenges that hindered their adaptation in their daily lives in Hungary. Two sub-themes emerged from this theme: accommodation and health services.

First, participants mentioned that their main challenge in Hungary was accommodation:

> *There are no dorms and rental fees are too expensive.* (H02)

Lack of dormitory facilities and high rental prices caused stress for the participants, making their daily life difficult. Also, another challenge for students was the health services in Hungary:

> *You cannot go and be treated, even in an emergency situation, for hours... Scary*! (H10)

Failure to obtain vital healthcare services caused the participants insecurity and anxiety that hindered the psychological adaptation and negatively affected their overall satisfaction.

Closeness of Family

The fact that Hungary is only a few hours away from Turkey by plane allowed participants and their families to easily visit each other. All participants talked about the advantages of being geographically close to Turkey:

> *There is no difference between living in separate cities in Turkey or my living in Budapest. I am home within two hours.* (H11)

Due to the proximity between Turkey and Hungary, there was no significant decrease in support from the families who are their main emotional source. Thus, the geographical proximity facilitated the participants' psychological adaptation process.

Category 4: Political Reflections in the Host Country

This category represents experiences dependent on the past and current socio-political climate of the host culture in the societal context.

The United States

Overall, participants mentioned that they faced different challenges that caused stress in their adaptation experiences due to their Muslim or Turkish identity. There is one theme under this category for participants in the United States: discrimination.

Discrimination

Recent political events influenced participants' adaptation process. According to data analysis, the political rhetoric against Muslims that took place frequently in the American media after 9/11 made all Muslims a target and identified them with terrorism. Consequently, Muslim participants, especially those who were distinctive in appearance, faced discrimination and social violence off campus because of some individuals' negative perceptions:

> *Due to the political issues in the United States, I got negative reactions off-campus because I wear a headscarf. Some people look at me as if I am a terrorist.* (U03)

In the multicultural United States where differences are embraced, being discriminated against because of religious identity shocked and humiliated the participants, and alienation hindered their psychological adaptation. Besides, participants noted the role of the current political relations between the United States and Turkey in their lives:

> *When the United States canceled visas for Turks. I felt that I would be stuck in this country without being able to see my family and Turkey. I worried very much. After a year, I was coming back from Turkey, and policemen asked me some questions at the airport. I was afraid, because I thought I would not be able to enter the United States.* (U09)

Fear and anxiety caused by certain practices influenced by political tensions between the two countries had a negative effect on participants' lives. It reduced any sense of belonging to the host country that they might have felt. The intense stress they experienced remained in the minds of the participants and continues to affect them, despite improved relations and the passage of time. Political stress factors negatively affected the general well-being of participants and made their psychological adaptation process harder.

Hungary

Overall, participants mentioned that current political solidarity between Turkey and Hungary contributed to their positive emotions. On the other hand, the participants emphasized that negative stereotyping due to a historical and political background shared with local people impacted their adaptation. There are two themes under this category for participants in Hungary: the hatred of the past and the alliance of the present.

Perceived Hostility from the Past

Although the shared historical background facilitated adaptation process in some ways, it has also been the source of negative Turkish stereotypes and participants drew attention to the negative effects on their adaptation process:

> *Due to Turkish occupation for 150 years, some Hungarians do not like Turks. When I wanted to rent a flat, the landlord said 'no home to Turks'. Also, Hungarians have a traditional children's song and its words are 'Turks are coming to kill you…'.* (H07)

Despite the passage of time, the harmful effect of stereotyping in intercultural relations has interfered with relationships between participants and locals. This example illustrates the impact of historical enmity on the current intercultural relations in the societal context. Negative ethnic stereotypes at the societal level reduced the participants' motivation to interact/contact/engage with locals and led to lower levels of life satisfaction. Thus, participants' psychological and sociocultural adaptations were affected negatively.

Alliance in the Present

On the other hand, based on the current political relations between Hungary and Turkey, participants defined the host and home countries as allies:

> *There are political parties which emphasizes that Hungarians are Turks. Furthermore, President Orban supports Turkey. He even joined the Turkic Council and said, 'We are Christian Kipcak Turks living in the West.'* (H14)

Political discourses, political attitudes in the host country, and the existing positive relations between Hungary and Turkey reinforced the perception of low cultural distance and caused the participants to feel an advantage over other cultural groups. Furthermore, it contributed to the perceptional and emotional attachment participants felt to Hungary. Thus, a positive political atmosphere facilitated the participants' psychological adaptation in Hungary.

Discussion

This study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the adaptation experiences of TIS in Hungary and the United States. Its primary importance is that the contextual variables of an adaptation process, which may differ between host countries, and their effects are clearly shown. This was achieved by examining the experiences of TIS with the same cultural background in two different host societies. It is also noteworthy that this research is the first study on TIS' adaptation in Hungary and the first comparative study on their cross-cultural adaptation in different contexts. According to findings, depending on the factors in the institutional, social and physical environment, and societal contexts, both the

psychological and sociocultural adaptation experiences of the participants in Hungary and the United States differed.

In terms of the institutional context, the school is a significant and effective factor for students' adaptation (Ward & Geeraert, 2016) and the two host countries offered mostly different opportunities to TIS. The study's findings indicated that communication with other students (e.g. Elsharnouby, 2015), physical and technological facilities (e.g. Mavondo, Tsarenko & Gabbott, 2004), interaction with school staff (e.g. Mesidor & Sly, 2016), campus climate (e.g. Koo, 2021), the education system implemented (e.g. Young, 2011), social opportunities and culturally sensitive practices of institutions differentiated the participants' academic motivation and school perception, as well as their psychological and sociocultural adaptation in the host country. Students' perceptions of the university environment significantly affect their social and academic lives (Hurtado et al., 1998). Consistently, where English is the official language, and all facilities and social opportunities can be found on-campus, TIS developed a positive perception of their academic environment in the United States. Nevertheless, academic competition increases students' anxiety (Van Nuland et al., 2015), and accordingly, the high academic competition of the United States harmed TIS' psychological and physical well-being.

On the other hand, studying in Hungary, which offers EMI programs, poses some serious problems for TIS that do not exist for their co-nationals studying in an English speaking country. He and Chiang (2016) drew attention to the disappointment and academic difficulties experienced by international students on EMI programs in China due to the lack of English language proficiency of non-native teachers. TIS in Hungary, who experienced similar challenges in our study, also experienced additional challenges such as separation from local students, feeling academically more disadvantaged than local students. The challenges that the participants faced in the institutional context negatively affected their school perception, academic motivation and also caused emotional detachment, which negatively affected their psychological and sociocultural adaptation processes.

In addition, the two host countries provided different urban facilities for TIS. Some cultural elements bearing Turkish traces in daily life due to the shared historical background and the urban facilities that students had in Hungary facilitated their adaptation experience. Also, easy access to Turkey due to its geographical proximity facilitated adaptation of TIS in Hungary. However, in contrast to the advantages TIS experienced in their daily lives in Hungary, those in the United States reported many challenges, which varied depending on the university's location. In line with our findings, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) indicated that

transportation is a significant concern that reinforces campus isolation for international students and negatively affects both the basic needs of students such as grocery shopping and social support systems at semi-urban campuses, however, it is not an issue for students in an urban area in the United States. Furthermore, family support positively affects cultural adaptation (Bertram et al., 2014). Consistently, the restriction on relationships with families due to the geographical distance from Turkey caused challenges and stress for TIS in the United States. Consequently, both psychological and sociocultural adaptation experiences of the students differed regarding the social and physical environmental factors.

Moreover, considering the societal context, the host culture's socio-political climate affects adaptation of individuals (Dimitrova et al., 2014). For example, the current political atmosphere caused problems for TIS in the United States such as visa issues and Islamophobia. In line with the present study findings, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) noted that after 9/11, challenges such as discrimination toward Muslim international students has increased in the United States. Additionally, Burkholder (2014) stated that TIS in the United States perceives the United States and Turkey as political allies. Conversely, participants in this study reported political conflicts between the United States and Turkey as a challenge in the host country, causing stress and pressure on them.

On the other hand, the current, strong political relations between Hungary and Turkey and especially political discourses emphasizing the cultural brotherhood between the two countries contributed to the TIS' perception of low cultural distance and overall satisfaction in Hungary. However, negative past political relations in the two countries' shared history have led to negative stereotypes against Turks. Stereotypes inhibit the intercultural communication of international students in the adaptation process (Pekerti et al., 2020) and also negatively affect their mental health (Lee & Rice, 2007). Consistently, their experiences due to stereotypes against their ethnic identity due to past political relations made TIS feel humiliated and hindered their adaptation in Hungary. Briefly, depending on the past or current political relationships between the host country and Turkey in the societal context, TIS' experiences in the adaptation process in the two host countries differed.

CHAPTER IV

ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGES AND HELP-SEEKING AMONG TURKISH

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Bearing in mind the effects of the stressful adjustment process on international students, and the importance of cultural factors in the accurate identification of students' problems, this study[3] aimed to investigate challenges and help-seeking among TIS in the United States during their adjustment process. We addressed the following research questions:

1. What were the adjustment challenges that TIS faced in the United States?

2. How did TIS seek help to cope with adjustment challenges in the United States?

Method

Qualitative methods focus on examining cultural influences, developments, and differences between social groups (Polit & Beck, 2004). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a qualitative analytical method widely used in psychology, was chosen to examine adaptation difficulties and help-seeking among TIS in the adaptation process in the United States because the focus of the study was to identify themes from the perspective of participants' experiences. This method allows for detailed organization and definition of datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the research design, an inductive approach was adopted for qualitative data analysis, which was performed by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Participants

Fifteen volunteer TIS were recruited for the study via social media groups. The group of participants comprised eight females and seven males living in the United States. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 36 years old, and they were studying for various academic degrees, including bachelor's (n = 4), master's (n = 6), and doctoral (n = 5) degrees from different universities in the United States. Turkish international students living in the United States for the purposes of higher education had been residing in the host country for between one and eight years.

Data Collection

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[3] Erturk, S., & Nguyen Luu, L. A. (2021). Adjustment challenges and help-seeking among Turkish international students in the United States/Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki Türk uluslararası öğrencilerin uyum zorlukları ve yardım arama davranışları. *Nitel Sosyal Bilimler*, *3*(2), 213-230.

Demographic information about the participants, including their arrival date in the host country and their age, educational background, language competency, and marital status were recorded in the basic datasheet. The semi-structured interview protocol was developed according to the literature on the cross-cultural adjustment process (e.g., Lee, Koeske & Sales, 2004; Ting & Hwang, 2009; Ward et al., 2001). Each participant was sent an information sheet about the study and a consent form via email. Once the participants had consented to participate in the study, Skype interviews were conducted in Turkish or English, scheduled according to the participants' preference. Each interview lasted for between 45 and 70 minutes and was audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. The participants' names were kept anonymous. Numbers were assigned to the participants from 1 to 15, while the letter P was used to represent participants.

Data Analysis

Due to its theoretically flexible and detailed approach in terms of revealing patterns, the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for the data analysis, since the focus of the present study was on identifying patterns within the experiences of TIS in the United States. Initially, the audio recordings were listened to without transcription and additional notes were made concerning the data. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis, the transcripts and the interviewer's memos and notes were subsequently read repeatedly by members of the research team, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the data and identify clustered meanings and patterns appearing across the dataset. After gaining sufficient familiarity with the data, initial codes were created to represent the meanings and patterns they contained. The different codes were then characterized into potential themes based on their similarities, resulting in a number of candidate themes. These themes were checked against the original dataset before being reviewed so as to reach a consensus about their definition and scope. Finally, the themes were reported, supported by direct quotes from the interviews.

To reinforce the validity of the study, various methods were applied to ensure its quality and trustworthiness. The first author took notes during the interviews in order to incorporate reflexivity regarding interviewee impressions, provide additional details, and interpret findings on the basis of data analysis after each interview. This enabled the first author to remember the interview sessions more accurately and to retain thoughts regarding the participants' statements.

Findings

In this section, the findings are structured according to two main themes — adjustment challenges and help-seeking — corresponding to the two research questions posed at the beginning of the present study.

Theme 1: Adjustment Challenges Among TIS

The first category corresponds to the first research question: What were the adjustment challenges that TIS faced in the United States? It addresses the challenges of adjusting to the changes faced by TIS in the United States, and their experiences in their new lives. The findings showed that these challenges negatively affected the overall satisfaction and well-being of TIS, largely due to the sociocultural differences between the host culture and the participants' home culture. Language issues, academic issues, cultural distance, discrimination, homesickness, loneliness, and financial issues were the major challenges identified by the participants as making their experience of adjustment harder than they had expected.

Sub-theme 1: Language Issues

Participants stated that their main challenge was the language barrier, especially during their first year. It negatively affected them psychologically and in terms of their interpersonal relationships. For example, due to their limited vocabulary, they were unable to express themselves correctly and had difficulty understanding others and following their teachers in the educational setting, especially in the initial transition period. Participants also reported that these challenges caused them to feel isolated, stressed, and insecure. As P7 explained:

> *Mostly, during the first semester, I felt really weird, stressed, and alien because I could not understand what people were talking about. I could not follow and answer them correctly due to my limited vocabulary. So I was silent.*

Furthermore, P15 stated:

> *The language barrier prevents deep relationships with local people. Because I cannot express myself fully, and I cannot joke, or we cannot understand each other sometimes. Thus, mutual satisfaction is not as desired, and relationships do not deepen.*

Sub-theme 2: Academic Issues

Participants reported that academic competition, fear of failure, unfamiliarity with the American education system, and excessive amounts of homework caused them to feel stressed, anxious, and hopeless. This situation not only affected them psychologically but also affected their physical health. For example, P5 stated:

The education system is utterly different than Turkey. I study hard and have a sleeping problem because of academic stress. There is no memorization system like in Turkey. In other words, it is not possible to be successful by memorizing the subjects a few days before the exam, because here we are asked not to memorize, that is, to repeat what we have learned, but to produce solutions and come up with new ideas. Therefore, I have to work for hours every day, understand the subjects and learn very well. The fear of failing as well as studying hard in this challenging education system is very stressful, and I could not find any solution to deal with it.

Sub-theme 3: Cultural Distance

Participants reported that they perceived the many cultural differences between Turkey and the United States as sources of stress and needed a long time to learn about American norms. For example, P1 reported:

American culture is very different—food, hospitality, social norms, etc. For example, kissing a friend of the same sex is usual in Turkey, a sign of homosexuality in the United States. We learned the differences over time by living.

Participants also reported cultural differences in relationships. They described Americans as individualistic people who maintain a greater distance in their interpersonal relationships. According to the findings, this greater personal distance caused TIS to feel lonely, dissatisfied, and homesick. In the words of P9:

When I share a problem, Americans do not care and do not want to listen. Also, I wonder something about them but cannot ask. Unlike us, Americans are distanced, superficial, and do not like sincerity.

In addition, according to the participants the absence of neighborly relations in the United States made them feel lonely, anxious, and isolated. For example, P15 explained:

Americans are individualistic. I do not even know my neighbors here. We just say hello and pass when we meet. This is so strange. If I die at home, my neighbors would not even notice.

Sub-theme 4: Discrimination

Participants reported being exposed to at least one incident of discrimination that caused them to feel anger. For example, P1 reported:

I was not accepted to the internship position at a company due to being an international student. Also, there is a professor in our department who only accepts American students as doctoral assistants. I think these are a kind of discrimination.

Sub-theme 5: Misperception about Turks

Participants reported that some Americans had misconceptions about Turks and Turkey. Some participants experienced hostile reactions after the September 11 attack, mainly because of the Muslim majority in Turkey. They described feeling marginalized, humiliated, and disappointed. For example, P6 explained:

> *Many Americans think that Turkey is an Arab state because, in their eyes, Islam and Arabs are identical. The fact that most Turkish people are Muslims causes this misperception. Some people ask questions such as do you ride camels, is not it challenging to live by the rules of shariah, how many wives will your husband have when you get married? They do not know that Turkey is a secular and democratic country and not everyone is Muslim. As a Turkish woman wearing a headscarf, I am often mistaken as an Arab by others. Also, I was insulted as an Islamic terrorist a few times after 9/11. These attitudes make me feel nervous and anxious.*

Sub-theme 6: Homesickness

Participants reported that being away from their families made them feel homesick. Especially during their first year, not being able to find the same kind of comfort in their new context as they experienced at home, or experiencing problems or intense academic stress, triggered homesickness among TIS. They stated that when they felt homesick, it was accompanied by feelings of depression and anxiety. For example, P13 stated:

> *I rarely was deeply homesick in my first year. I was alone and felt that I am not belong to anywhere. I was asking myself what I am doing here, where my home is.*

Also, P4 noted:

> *My classes are very difficult and when I have difficulties I feel homesick and want to be in Turkey.*

Sub-theme 7: Loneliness

Participants reported that while they shared responsibilities with their families in Turkey, having to take full responsibility for their lives on their own and being unable to find the intimacy they had expected in their friendships due to cultural differences made them feel lonely. This situation caused participants to experience emotional stress. As P8 reported:

> *I feel basically, alone. I have to do everything by myself. Definitely this is normal that I have to control my life myself, but sometimes I do not want to do everything alone.*

Sub-theme 8: Financial Issues

Participants reported that the devaluation of the Turkish lira against the dollar caused financial difficulties, which they experienced with greater intensity every passing day. The

situation resulted in emotional pressure and stress and also restricted the participants' social lives. For example, P2 reported:

> *Turkish currency is decreasing rapidly and it cannot compare with the U.S. dollar.*
> *That makes me so stressful. I have to work to manage my life.*

Overall, the findings showed that TIS faced many different challenges in their academic and social lives in the United States. These challenges made their cross-cultural adjustment harder and negatively affected their overall satisfaction and well-being.

Theme 2: Help-Seeking Among TIS

The second category corresponds to the second research question: How did TIS seek help to cope with the challenges of adjustment to the United States? According to the participants, their help-seeking had an impact on their overall satisfaction and well-being as a buffer against the sociocultural challenges of adjustment. Depending on the types of challenges faced during their adjustment process, TIS sought help from different sources. Two themes emerged in this category: help-seeking from informal sources and formal sources.

Sub-theme 1: Help-Seeking From Informal Sources

The findings showed that when dealing with sociocultural adjustment challenges in the United States, TIS preferred to seek help primarily from family members, peers, or advisors with whom they had a close relationship. Participants described having relationships with individuals from different groups, including locals, co-nationals, and other internationals.

Participants reported that their families were their main source of emotional help in overcoming the challenges they faced in the host country. This was because of their strong family bonds, the nature of Turkish culture, and the sense of trust and understanding within their families. In the words of P3:

> *If I have a problem or am unhappy here, I call my family. Time-zone difference restrict*
> *our relationships, but I get all kinds of support, and they motivate me because they*
> *know me best. Family is everything.*

Moreover, the data analysis showed that most of the participants' best friends were Turkish, and they sought emotional help from each other. In this respect, the behavior of TIS was determined by their common language and culture, similar experiences in the host country, sincerity, a feeling of intimacy due to relatively small personal space, a sense of being understood, and mutual trust. For example, P14 reported:

> *I made two close Turkish friends with whom we help each other in difficult times. They*
> *understand me due to the same cultural background and speaking Turkish. We hug*

each other, touch or open ourselves without hesitation or even swear and cry when we are angry or happy. No one misunderstands anyone, but this is impossible with others. Unlike us, Americans and most internationals are distanced, superficial, and do not like intimacy and sincerity due to their high personal space.

Additionally, participants stated that they had to deal with serious academic stress and initially received academic support from their American and other international friends. For example, P6 stated:

For the first time in my life, I faced the feeling of academic failure. This feeling was very heavy. Fortunately, my Indian and American friends helped and motivated me. Then, I overcame with it.

In addition, P10 reported:

Language, system, relations are different and stressful here. In this sense, we are in solidarity with other foreign students because we experience the same things. So, we understand and help each other. Otherwise, it is impossible to be successful alone.

Furthermore, participants reported experiencing daily hassles and receiving practical support from experienced TIS and American friends. Participants also reported that they had positive relations with their advisors, who supported them on and off campus. As P9 noted:

I prefer my experienced friends [Turks] due to our practical thinking, or Americans who know the United States best, especially my advisor. We have a supportive and good relationship off campus as well.

Sub-theme 2: Help-Seeking From Formal Sources

This theme refers to the extent to which students benefited from counseling services that provided professional support in coping with the challenges they faced during the adjustment process. This theme also addressed the perceptions they developed about counseling services in the United States.

Participants were adequately informed about the counseling services by their respective colleges, and their advisors directed them to counseling services when needed. In the words of P5:

Counseling service is a part of academic life here. We are informed about it by email often, and advisors direct the students in need. There was a course on "Adaptation to American Culture" in my first year. I learned a lot about the adaptation process, and how to deal with stressors. This course and my advisor's support made me feel relaxed and comfortable about living in the United States.

Furthermore, participants living in the United States who received academic help from the school counseling services were satisfied with the support they were given. For example, P12 reported:

I applied to the counseling service for academic issues such as motivation and preparing a study plan. Counselors helped me. It was a nice motivation.

Participants living in the United States who sought help from college counseling services for challenges other than academic challenges reported that they did not continue with the consultations because they felt that the counselors ignored their cultural norms and failed to understand them. The participants were not satisfied. As P11 noted:

Once, I applied to a counselor, but our mindset is different. The counselor did not understand me and my cultural norms that I mentioned to them such as I cannot lie down on the sofa, or cross my legs when my father is in the living room. Actually, it was ineffective. It is good only for simple academic stuff, not more.

Additionally, P3 explained:

My sister had a marriage that I did not approve of. Some developments in my sister's marriage because of her mother-in-law were really sad and she shared them with me. Then, I told my sister that she needed a divorce and that I would support her in any way possible. I was very sad about what happened and shared this in detail with the counselor. Instead of understanding me, the counselor reminded me that we have separate lives in different countries and that I should respect my sister's life and decisions instead of meddling in her life. The counselor couldn't understand what was going on and why I felt so responsible for my sister and so sorry for her...

Moreover, participants who sought help from off-campus health care services also stated that they were not satisfied because the mental health provider did not understand them due to their cultural background. In this regard, P10 reported:

Adaptation was very hard. The university counselor referred me to a behavioral healthcare center. I met with the psychiatrist monthly for prescribing medication and with the psychologist biweekly. The psychologist never caught my perspective due to cultural differences. She was looking blankly at my face most of the time.

The effect of stigma on participants' utilization of counseling services was also examined, and none of the participants reported any stigma-related concern. In fact, the findings showed that TIS in the United States saw college counseling services as a part of academic life; however, for them, it was cultural insensitivity on the part of the counselors

rather than academic issues per se that caused their dissatisfaction with the counseling services.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of challenges and help-seeking among TIS studying in the United States during the adjustment process. According to the findings, TIS faced many challenges while living in the United States, including language issues and discrimination. To cope with these challenges, they sought help from different groups of individuals, depending on the situation. The findings showed that TIS turned first to their families for help and support. Help-seeking from professionals was determined by the participants' perceptions of counseling services and the cultural sensitivity of the mental health providers.

Participants faced various challenges during the cross-cultural adjustment process in the United States. The findings of the present study include problems experienced by TIS that are consistent with previous studies on adjustment and acculturation among TIS in the United States (Burkholder, 2014; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007, 2011; Kilinc & Granello, 2003). Mori (2000) stated that the language barrier is the most common cause of stress among international students during the adjustment process. Also, Duru and Poyrazli (2007; 2011) stated that a high level of English language proficiency reduces acculturative stress among TIS and facilitates the adjustment process. Consistent with these results, the findings of the present study showed that the language barrier was an important factor in terms of both satisfaction in social life and academic achievement among TIS. Inability to express themselves fully and to understand their friends due to the language barrier hindered TIS from achieving satisfaction in their relationships. In addition, students may have experienced difficulties in understanding their teachers and actively participating in classes due to the language barrier.

In terms of their academic lives, TIS experienced intense stress due to their unfamiliarity with the education system. Academic difficulties negatively affected the students' general well-being and resulted in restrictions in their social lives. Misra, Crist and Burant (2003) stated that international students who experience academic stress react more intensely to other stressors in the adjustment process. Similarly, the findings of the present study showed that TIS experienced greater homesickness, especially during exam periods, due to academic stress, making the adjustment process harder.

The findings also demonstrated the impacts of Turkish culture on the cross-cultural adjustment of TIS who participated in the study. Participants living in the United States

perceived a significant cultural distance between Turkish and American culture. This cultural difference was felt most keenly with respect to relationships, because even though Turkey is a country that embodies both collectivist and individualist values, its collectivistic nature is preserved in terms of relationships (Mocan-Aydin, 2000). This meant that TIS perceived cultural differences, including personal distance in relationships, as a challenge in their adjustment process. The perception of cultural distance caused TIS to feel lonely, homesick, and isolated, thus negatively affecting both their psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Moreover, the present study showed that TIS faced challenges due to the negative political discourse about Muslims in the United States caused stress and anxiety among TIS. In particular, Muslim women who were visible because of wearing a headscarf experienced verbal attacks and discrimination. This finding was consistent with earlier findings by Kilinc and Granello (2003), who emphasized that more religious TIS were more dissatisfied and less acculturated. In other words, challenges based on political issues in the United States hindered the adjustment process among TIS.

Similar to the findings of previous studies on help-seeking among Turkish students in Turkey and the United States, in the present study TIS turned first to their families for emotional help, as a culture-based attitude. Imamoglu (2003) described how Turkish culture is family centered and how close family members are the main sources of advice when addressing personal problems. Moreover, this is consistent with the findings by Burkholder (2014), who reported how TIS emphasized that their best friends were Turkish due to shared language, familiarity, and cultural background. The findings of the present study were also consistent with the finding of and Bektas et al. (2009), who mentioned the importance of support from co-nationals in the adjustment process among TIS in the United States.

Participants highlighted intimacy and sincerity in relationships with co-nationals as determinants for seeking emotional help from them to cope with negative feelings such as loneliness in the host country. As pointed out by Adams and Plaut (2003), the meaning of friendship varies from culture to culture. Mocan-Aydin (2000) described how Turkish culture emphasizes friendship and sharing as a feature of its collectivistic nature. Same-sex hugging, kissing, or touching are rituals among Turkish people, expressing love, acceptance, and understanding (Mocan-Aydin, 2000). Besides, hugging close friends is a sign of solidarity among Turkish people, and Turkish who regard hugging as normal tend to perceive more reserved people as being cold (Cetin, Bahar & Griffiths, 2017). Sincerity and intimacy are therefore crucial factors in terms of emotional help-seeking among TIS who are accustomed to Turkish norms and collectivistic relationships.

All the participants living in the United States reported that they had learnt about their respective college counseling services from official sources. They had been informed by an email from the college and by their advisors, and, if necessary, they had even been directed to the counseling services by their advisors. Frequent exposure to such information via different channels positively affected these participants' attitudes and behavior toward the counseling services. Participants considered college counseling services as part of their academic life and sought help from the college counseling services to deal with their academic challenges. They also emphasized that they were, by and large, satisfied with these services.

At the same time, some of the TIS participants in the United States who applied to the counseling services to deal with challenges other than academic issues were not satisfied, because they felt that they were not understood by the counselors, who were unaware of their cultural norms and values. The counselors' cultural insensitivity negatively affected the participants' approach to the counseling services. Notably, the American Counseling Association (2014) emphasized that "multicultural counseling competency is required across all counseling specialties, counselors [should] gain knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, dispositions, and skills pertinent to being a culturally competent counselor in working with a diverse client population" (American Counseling Association, 2014, p.8). In multicultural settings, counselors must have the qualities specified by the American Counseling Association so that, at the very least, they can make a general cultural assessment of their clients. An overall cultural assessment is only possible with an understanding of the client's cultural framework, their identity, the cultural explanations behind their help-seeking, and the cultural elements within the counselor–client relationship (Kress, Dixon & Shannonhouse, 2010).

CHAPTER V

GENERAL DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS and LIMITATIONS

This chapter discusses and compares the findings of three studies, originally formulated as comparative research and reported in Chapters II, III, IV, within the theoretical framework of Ward et al. (2001; 2016). It also draws implications for practice and future research, and shows the limitations of our studies.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of TIS sojourners in Germany, Hungary, and the United States. According to the findings, TIS with the same cultural background had unique experiences in the cross-cultural adaptation based on the three different host countries where they studied. The academic setting and opportunities, environmental factors, and social/societal relations offered by the host country to TIS in an ecological context, as well as both physical and cultural distance between the host country and Turkey, differentiated the adaptation experiences of TIS. TIS also had similar experiences in Hungary, Germany, and the United States, but upon in-depth analysis, the content of their contextual experiences differed according to the host country.

According to Ward and Geeraert (2016), schools are an effective and crucial context in the adaptation process of young people. Also, Tartakovsky (2012) stated that a supportive school environment could be essential and effective in motivating students to have a positive attitude toward the host country. In terms of institutional context, for the TIS in Germany, the university was not only the place where they received their education but also an interactive environment for socializing. Both the library and cafeteria culture, as well as the provision of free events on campus, and the supportive and organized school system itself, contributed to the sociocultural, psychological, and academic adaptation process of the students in the school setting. Similarly, Lewthwaite (1996) found that the fact that international students feel more interest, friendship, and hospitality in their relations with the academic staff in the current university compared to the lecturers in their home country, directly affects their satisfaction with their sojourn in the host country. Besides the attractiveness of the positive campus atmosphere, the belief of TIS in Germany in the quality of the education they received increased their satisfaction.

Conversely, TIS in Germany experienced stress in their academic context due to the language barrier and the challenging education system. As Andrade (2009) emphasized, language proficiency of internationals is a critical component of academic adjustment. Accordingly, TIS experienced stress due to their limited language competence, preventing

them from fully expressing themselves and following professors and in-class discussions. Besides, in the complicated German education system, which is very different from the education system they were used to, intense homework, fear of failure, and for some, the fear of being expelled from school after failing the same course exam three times, became a source of severe stress for TIS. For international students who have to learn a different culture and language, the process of coping with and adapting to these accumulated stressors can consume both physical and psychological resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of psychological distress or physical illness (Lazarus & Folkman, 1994). In addition, the findings of the present study showed that this intense pace of academic work was one of the most important obstacles to students' socialization.

Similarly, for TIS in the United States, the university was a setting that provided all the academic opportunities, a high-quality education, support from staff and colleagues, and the means to develop their social skills and create social networks for their future life. Elliott and Healy (2001) indicated that student-centeredness, a supportive campus climate, and effective teaching positively affect students' satisfaction with their educational experience. Like TIS in Germany, those in the US who were actively at the center of their academic processes and whose academic expectations were met, consistently developed a positive perception of the academic environment. The positive perception they developed concerning the opportunities offered in the academic environment contributed significantly to TIS motivation to be in the United States and facilitated their cross-cultural adaptation process.

Also, TIS in the United States, similarly to TIS in Germany, experienced stress in their academic setting due to the language barrier and challenging education system. Differently, they faced institutional-level discrimination and high competition. Academic competition increases students' anxiety (Van Nuland et al., 2015), and accordingly, the high academic competition in the United States has been reported by TIS to negatively influence psychological and physical well-being. Moreover, according to the findings of the present three studies, the social lives of students who had to spend most of their time studying in order to fulfill the requirements of the challenging education system, were disrupted. Thence, the competitive education system hindered the sociocultural adaptation process as well. In addition, TIS, along with other international students, could not participate in some projects because they were not American citizens and thus faced discrimination. Previous studies have shown that discrimination negatively affects students' satisfaction (e.g., Duru & Poyrazli, 2011), sense of belonging to the host country, and institutional commitment (e.g., Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010). Although TIS developed positive relationships at the individual level,

being discriminated against, especially at the institutional level, because they are not American citizens, caused disappointment in the students and negatively affected their psychological well-being.

On the other hand, TIS in Hungary could not develop a positive perception and sense of belonging to the universities where they studied as much as TIS in Germany and the United States. The sense of school belonging is a mediator between the perceived school context and psychological well-being (Roeser, Midgley & Urdan, 1996), and it also has indirect effects on the life satisfaction of culturally diverse students (Suldo, Shaffer & Riley, 2008). According to TIS in Hungary, despite all university staff's positive attitudes and behaviors, the university was a setting where they only attended classes, and their physical, social, and academic needs and expectations were not fully met. As Ward et al. (2001) stated, increasing differences between expectations and experiences regarding the host country are associated with more psychological adjustment problems. TIS faced many challenges in the institutional context that hindered both their psychological and sociocultural adaptations.

The social areas, auditoriums, library quality, accommodation facilities, and employment facilities of the universities are the factors that strongly affect the students' general satisfaction (Hanssen & Solvoll, 2015; Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018). In parallel, the needs of TIS in Hungary were met to a lesser extent in the institutional context due to the limited facilities mentioned. This negatively affected their school perceptions, sense of belonging, and academic motivation, as well as their satisfaction, thus complicating their cross-cultural adaptation processes. Moreover, unlike TIS in Germany and the United States, TIS studying at Hungarian Universities offering EMI programs to international students, often reported stress due to the perceived English language inadequacy of lecturers and local students as well as, or rather than, their own language limitations (e.g., Szabo, 2018; Roszik-Volovik & Nguyen Luu, 2020).

In addition, similar to the findings of Roszik-Volovik and Nguyen Luu (2020), a sense of relative deprivation was felt by international students. They perceived that, compared to local students in the same educational institution, they had a smaller amount, or complete lack of opportunities such as practices and internship applications, as well as an inability to get full answers to their questions in lectures. This negatively affected the academic studies and motivation of TIS. Also, Roszik-Volovik and Nguyen Luu (2020) highlighted that international students at some universities in Hungary perceived a discouraging inequality between their own treatment and that of local students. In this context, some TIS in Hungary were financially and psychologically disappointed and evaluated themselves as financial

commodities rather than students. Thus, they experienced emotional detachment from their academic setting, and their psychological adaptation process was hindered.

Overall, TIS in Hungary, Germany, and the United States had largely different experiences in the institutional context, and accordingly, they developed different perceptions and had to overcome different stressors. The resources used by TIS and the help received from social support networks to cope with the stressors they encountered, could also differ according to the host country they were in. TIS in Germany and the United States sought help and support from both locals and internationals to cope with the stress associated with academic life. However, apart from the university staff who were supportive in the academic environment, TIS in Hungary could not benefit sufficiently from the support of local students due to both school separation and language barrier. Despite this, TIS in Hungary have built strong relationships with international students and have supported each other to overcome academic stressors. These are the natural relationships that students create spontaneously. One important difference, however, was that US universities had student associations, thus providing an organized close contact opportunity for students to develop such relationships. Associations, which contributed to the strengthening of intra-group and inter-group relations and the creation of social networks in the academic environment, functioned as units where students provided solidarity as an important support element in the adaptation process. In addition, school counseling services were a natural part of academic life for TIS in the United States, and they received professional support from counselors to cope with academic stress. However, TIS in Germany and Hungary did not benefit from counseling services regarding their academic stressors.

In terms of societal context, TIS in Germany felt freer to express themselves because they did not feel the social and political pressure that is present in Turkey, and Germans respected different opinions. Also, the fact that most Germans, especially young Germans, are open-minded, positively affected the cross-cultural adaptation process of TIS. Besides, the multicultural German social structure gave TIS the opportunity to establish relationships with individuals from different backgrounds. Multicultural experiences can increase an individual's self-esteem, self-efficacy, and creativity (Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013). In the present study, TIS, who were aware of the importance of living in a multicultural German society and considered it to be an opportunity for their personal development (e.g., intercultural communication skills), valued it as much as the quality of education they received, and were consequently satisfied with it.

On the other hand, in comparison, TIS perceived Germans as different from Turks, as people with high personal distance and sense of individualism, and who did not establish deep relationships. Such perceived cultural differences in relationships with locals have reduced the satisfaction of TIS. Another stressor that reduced the satisfaction that TIS felt in relations with Germans was the stereotyping and discrimination they were exposed to. The host country's attitudes towards foreigners are affected by their political atmosphere, and this affects the cross-cultural adaptation process of minorities positively or negatively (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Turks, the largest minority group in Germany, are often exposed to negative attitudes and targeted for discrimination (Greitemeyer & Schwab, 2014; Wagner et al., 2003), and issues around Turkish immigration are frequently discussed in German media and on academic platforms. The existing negative atmosphere towards Turkish immigrants sometimes affected Turkish students, especially when they were off-campus. TIS found themselves being stigmatized as uneducated due to locals' perceptions regarding Turkey, and they were labeled as reactionary Muslims, regardless of whether they were Muslim or not. This created a perception of threat to their social identity in Germany. Individuals who are devalued due to their group membership lose their courage because of the treatment towards them and report that their educational ambitions decrease (Van Laar, Derks & Ellemers, 2013). According to the findings of the present study, in order to prove that they are not so, and to change the existing perception, TIS in Germany had to put more effort into their relations.

TIS in the United States had mostly similar experiences and perceptions as those in Germany. They rated locals however, as open-minded, polite, and respectful and non-judgmental. In addition, the most important factor that made the United States attractive to TIS was its multicultural society. Like TIS in Germany, the students evaluated living in a society with different backgrounds as a chance and this increased their satisfaction concerning their experience in the host country. That said, similar to TIS in Germany, those in the United States also perceived a high cultural distance in their relations with locals. Wanting deeper and more intimate relationships, TIS viewed this as a situation that reduced their satisfaction because, even though Turkey is a country that embodies both collectivist and individualist values, its collectivist nature is preserved in terms of relationships (House et al., 2004; Mocan-Aydin, 2000).

Besides, TIS in the United States, just as TIS in Germany, were discriminated against due to the political atmosphere of the host country. After 9/11, a political and social climate was created in the United States that promoted prejudice and discrimination against anyone

who appeared to be Middle Eastern or Muslim (Britto, 2008). In line with this, according to the findings of the present research, female Muslim students from Turkey who were particularly visible due to their wearing of a headscarf, experienced verbal attacks and discrimination. Besides, the suspension of visa applications for non-immigrants due to current political relations between Turkey and the host country has victimized TIS who are not politically minded and this political discrimination, which they have been exposed to at the official level, has negatively affected their well-being. Iranian students in Hungary have faced similar difficulties. They have problems in obtaining and extending visas, and are refused by many banks from opening accounts due to international sanctions against Iran (Hosseini-Nezhad et al., 2021). At the least, these processes become more time consuming and require more paperwork due to their nationality, and this causes students increased anxiety and hindrance to their adaptation process (Hosseini-Nezhad et al., 2021).

Unlike TIS in the United States and Germany, TIS in Hungary described the Hungarians as similar to themselves, despite some differences such as higher personal distance and caution about personal space. However, Fulop and Sebestyen (2012) showed that American students in Hungary complained that Hungarians did not pay attention to personal space, especially in public places. The elements that are different in the host country from their own culture require an individual's adaptation (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). In this context, having similar behavioral patterns, attitudes, and traditions with Hungarians not only facilitated the sociocultural adaptation process of the students but also contributed to the psychological adaptation process by causing them to feel close to the local people. In addition, despite not having a multicultural society like Germany or the United States, the high international population in big cities and especially Hungarian universities allowed TIS to experience different cultures and increased their satisfaction, while the limited Turkish population has reinforced the feelings of solidarity among the co-nationals.

Moreover, considering the current political atmosphere, unlike the long-standing negative perception of Turkish immigrants in Germany and discriminative practices against Turkish citizens in the United States, TIS in Hungary have experienced some advantages due to the current strong relations of the host country with Turkey. However, on the other hand, due to the Turkish occupation about 400 years ago, some TIS reported being subjected to prejudices by the local people. Hewstone and Swart (2011) reported that minorities avoided contact with the majority group when they expected discrimination and adverse treatment. Similarly, such experiences demotivated TIS from engaging with locals in Hungary. Besides that, the language barrier was the main reason for students' communicational difficulties with

locals. TIS did not develop the Hungarian speaking proficiency level required for daily functioning and continued their lives only in English. Gong et al. (2021) showed that not being able to speak the language of the host country reduces the willingness of international students to interact with the local people and hinders their integration into the local community. Consistently, TIS were able to communicate only with English-speaking Hungarians (a rather small portion of the population) and faced sharp separation from the local population. Not fully involved in the local society, TIS' cross-cultural adaptation process was affected negatively.

Overall, TIS in Hungary, Germany, and the United States have developed social relations and perceptions regarding locals depending on the cultural distance and political atmosphere between the host country and the country of origin in the social context. Primarily, TIS sometimes felt more comfortable in the society of the host countries (e.g., when expressing themselves). Geeraert et al. (2019) mentioned that cultures with looser norms and greater tolerance for deviations offer individuals a much wider range of behavior and also that those from a tighter culture and living in a looser culture adapt more easily. As seen in the study of Gelfand et al. (2011), Turkey (9.2) is culturally tighter than Hungary (2.9), Germany (East: 7.5, West: 6.5) and the United States (5.1). Therefore, compared to Turkish society, where social and political pressure is felt, such differences were positively evaluated and increased all participants' motivation to integrate into their host countries. However, TIS faced discrimination and stereotypes as serious stressors in host countries for different reasons. In order to cope with the stressors they encountered in a societal context, TIS sought emotional help from their social support networks. Regardless of the host country, most TIS had a best friend who was Turkish. Bektas et al. (2009) stated that relationships with co-nationals are crucial for mental health and that the social support that TIS receive from co-nationals during the process of adjustment to the United States is a significant predictor of their successful psychological adjustment. Consistently, TIS reported strong solidarity with co-nationals due to shared language, familiarity, and cultural background in their host country. Also, they highlighted intimacy and sincerity in relationships with co-nationals as determinants for seeking emotional help from them to cope with negative feelings.

In addition, concerning help-seeking among Turks, the rule is that family members must support one another in a mutually beneficial manner (Sumer & Rasmussen, 2012). Individuals who are experiencing problems consult their families first (Imamoglu, 2003). Emphasizing that they have close and strong relationships with their family members (e.g., Hosseini-Nezhad et al., 2019), TIS reported that they shared many positive and negative

things with them and received support. Their life and experiences in the host country leads to changes in their perception and evaluation of their own culture, but the tendency of students to maintain their emotional dependence on their parents is remarkable. It is possible to explain this situation with the autonomous-related self theory (Kagitcibasi, 1996; 2005). According to Kagitcibasi (2005), autonomy and relatedness are two basic needs instead of opposite poles, and it is possible for individuals to have a self-construal in which these two independent dimensions are seen together. In the culture of relatedness (collectivism), psychological interdependence is ingrained (Kagitcibasi, 1996) and social support networks including family play an important role in the adaptation process of individuals (Kagitcibasi, 2005). In Germany and Hungary, which are 2-3 hours away from Turkey and located in similar time zones, TIS could easily get support from their families when needed. However, due to the time zone difference and geographical distance, unlike in Hungary and Germany, TIS in the United States communication with their families was restricted and created a source of stress for them. Not being able to call comfortably when they needed them or the fear that they would not be able to be there for their families in urgent and important situations affected the TIS negatively in the United States. Also, unlike TIS in Germany and Hungary, TIS in the United States sought help from professional counseling services for emotional support. However, they were unsatisfied due to counselors' cultural insensitivity.

In terms of daily living issues and physical environmental factors, when TIS in Germany compared their host country with Turkey regarding daily life, they defined Germany as a more secure, prosperous, and comfortable country and did not state any problems in daily matters such as food, dressing style, leisure activities, and transportation. These positive differences facilitated both the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of TIS in Germany. Another detail is that many Turkish businesses such as markets, grocers, restaurants, and taxis are common in Germany due to a large number of Turkish immigrants. Pecoud (2003) reported that there are Turkish businesses in almost every German city and Turks have introduced new products such as "doner kebab" to Germany. Therefore, the opportunity to access a settled migrant population and businesses that can facilitate the adaptation of TIS puts them in an advantageous position. However, unlike in Turkey, the low number of sunny days, and cold weather throughout the year in Germany was a serious stressor in the daily lives of TIS. Zhang, Mohamedahmed and Xiao (2020) revealed that international students from countries with hot climates have difficulties adapting to the Chinese climate, and this negatively affects their cross-cultural adaptation process. In the present study, prolonged

exposure to cloudy weather caused students to feel depressed, negatively affecting their psychological well-being.

On the other hand, the daily living conditions and physical environment of Turkey and the United States were quite different. Therefore, TIS in the United States, who drew attention to the differences within the United States rather than Turkey, mostly expressed the difficulties related to their daily lives. Similar to TIS in Germany, most of TIS' well-being was negatively affected by climate differences. As Evivie (2009) stated, studying in countries with different weather conditions than they are used to in their home country is not easy for many international students. In addition, some TIS in the United States had worrying safety problems in the region where they were living. Besides, unlike TIS in Germany and Hungary, the lack of public transport facilities in many regions contributed to TIS in the United States being isolated on-campus. Moreover, the fact that most on-campus catering is fast-food-style and transportation to off-campus shopping places is limited, negatively affects the students' dietary habits. Similarly, Pan et al. (1999) showed in their study that the diets of Asian students in American universities undergo undesirable changes. Ethnic food can be poor quality, hard to find or financially unaffordable, so the students tend to live on fast food. For this reason, students have become obligated to buy a car in order to meet their daily needs, such as groceries and other essential items, or to be involved in off-campus social activities. The students are already challenged by a limited budget and fluctuations in the Turkish currency. The expense of a car is an added burden and therefore negatively affects them socially and psychologically.

According to TIS in Hungary, the daily living conditions and physical environment of the two countries were quite similar. For this reason, there were no great differences in the lives of TIS, and thus, the cross-cultural adaptation process became easier. TIS were able to maintain many habits, and on top of that, the differences that existed added comfort to their daily lives in Hungary, and the students evaluated these differences positively. TIS in Hungary, who described their daily life as easier, free, and safer than in Turkey enjoyed benefits that met their daily needs: centrally located universities, advanced nightlife, and efficient transport networks. In the study of Fulop and Sebestyen (2012), American students consistently noted the positive contribution of the transportation system and nightlife in Hungary to their sojourn, and also, in Szabo's (2018) study, international students emphasized that life in Hungary is safe. In addition, in the same study, some international students stated that the taste and ingredients of the food in Hungary was a problem for them. However, in the present study, TIS did not report such a problem; on the contrary, they reported the similarity

between Turkish and Hungarian cuisine and their satisfaction with it. In addition, TIS mostly criticized the Hungarian medical system. Zhong et al. (2020) stated that when an international student in the United Kingdom had a medical problem such as a fever or flu, the doctor could not provide them with help, because the waiting period for a doctor's appointment exceeded two to three weeks. In line with this, not being able to get an appointment from health institutions at a suitable time or having to wait for a long time, even in emergency situations, made TIS nervous and hindered their cross-cultural adaptation process.

Overall, while students in the United States had more difficulties in their daily lives, TIS in Hungary experienced extra convenience in their daily lives due to the similarity of the host country with Turkey and those in Germany due to the high number of Turkish immigrants in the host country. Nevertheless, TIS needed support for daily living issues in the host country. In this context, TIS in Germany looked first to their local peers for support, as they are the ones who best know the daily life in the host country. TIS in the United States, on the other hand, received support from their advisors regarding off-campus, daily-living hassles and especially sought help from their experienced co-nationals, too. The continuation of their relations with their advisors off-campus and their ability to reach their advisors and also get support on non-academic issues when they needed it contributed to the cross-cultural adaptation process of TIS in the United States. In Hungary, social support from locals was limited due to the language barrier, but this difficulty was shared with other internationals. Along with the awareness that their were only a limited number of their co-nationals in Hungary, this factor facilitated and positively affected TIS' sense of solidarity with each other in their daily life in the host country.

Considering the frameworks in which Ward and colleagues (2001; 2016) used the principle of cultural distance and previous studies (e.g., English, Zhang & Tong, 2021; Ward & Searle, 1991), sojourners experience more difficulties and stress in their lives due to an increase in differences between the country of origin and the host country and this negatively affects both their psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Overall, due to a shared historical background between Hungarians and Turks and the similar environmental conditions (e.g., climate) between Hungary and Turkey, actual daily hassles were less than they had expected. Also, TIS in Hungary perceived similarities with Hungarians in their social relations. Perceived low cultural distance in relations and everyday life contributed significantly to their cross-cultural adaptation. Conversely, the academic expectations of the students, who had many difficulties in the academic context, mainly due to the language barrier, could not be fully met, and their disappointments negatively affected their overall

satisfaction. On the other hand, TIS in the United States experienced many differences in their daily lives, and TIS in Germany and the United States perceived higher cultural distance in their social relationships. However, TIS in Germany and the United States, whose expectations were met in accordance with the aims of the sojourn in the academic context, had high satisfaction. Another important finding is that the closeness of the physical distance corresponding to the 2-3 hours flight time between the host country and Turkey significantly contributed to the psychological well-being of TIS in Germany and Hungary. The results showed that the primary source of emotional support for TIS in all three countries is family. In addition, co-nationals are the best emotional supporters for TIS in the three host countries due to a shared language and cultural background.

This study draws attention to the effect of variables at the societal level on the adaptation process of individuals – both society of origin and society of settlement. The effects are considered separately/independently and include past and present socio-political relations and physical distance between the home and host cultures. In other words, interactive dynamics between the international students' cultural characteristics and the host country's cultural characteristics were emphasized, explicitly. Considering Ward and Geeraert (2016), who show the effects of these societal, institutional and familial contexts, this research contributes to Ward and Geeraert's ecological framework in the adaptation process by emphasizing the affect of the physical context that includes city and school facilities. In this study, Hungary, Germany, and the United States presented/tasked a natural laboratory setting to compare the impact of host culture on the adaptation of international students from the same cultural background. Thus, these three natural laboratory settings (Hungary, Germany and the United States) provided an opportunity to detail the impact of the ecological contexts of the host culture on the students' adaptation process and also served as a design for the empirical investigation of the Ward and Geeraert (2016)' ecological framework of adaptation and acculturation.

One of our research's further contributions is to call attention to some specific, under-researched, although highly significant domains of the socioecological context of acculturation and adaptation of international students such as: a) the cultural and ethnic diversity or the seemingly homogenous makeup of the host society's population; b) the presence, number, and prestige of, and the attitudes toward, the settled migrant community from the same home country in the host society; c) the present political atmosphere in the host society concerning the home country; d) the shared historical past between the home and the host country and resulting attitudes; e) the presence of the time(zone) difference between the

home and host country. Most of these concern the interactive relation between the characteristics of the home and those of the host culture and their contexts. While Ward and Geeraert (2016)'s model firstly describes these two contexts, our findings underline the importance of the investigation of the interplay between them.

Implications

This study reveals several implications about TIS for advisors, administrators, professors and other employees at Hungarian, German and American universities, and highlights the importance of systematic programs for TIS' adaptation. The results of this study suggest that the universities need to develop different strategies for counseling services. Moreover, during and after the pre-term orientation week, workshops and training sessions that introduce the host culture may be useful for improving well-being and enabling the behavioral adaptation of TIS. Also, organized student associations can be an important resource to support TIS in creating social support networks. Therefore, support in establishing them within universities in a systematic way, increasing their number, promoting them from the orientation week onwards, and ensuring the participation of TIS, could all be beneficial.

Additionally, universities could consider intercultural competence training for students and university personnel in order to enlighten them to the harmful effects of stereotyping and discrimination. Thus, social boundaries between host and TIS would fall and the degree of perceived social acceptance of TIS could be enhanced. For example, under the control of counselors, culturally sensitive posters and social clubs that include local students may be helpful to both local and international students in improving cultural sensitivity, strengthening their ability to make friends and increasing interaction between students. Thus, TIS are encouraged to become actively involved in their adaptation. Also, counselors may contribute to the development and strengthening of TIS' ability to cope with stress through participating in group activities. Therefore, psychologists may help TIS find their most effective coping strategy.

Moreover, counselors ought to take into account TIS' cultural background when providing professional services, and they must remember that personal and cultural limitations may prevent many TIS from seeking counseling services to address their negative experiences (e.g., discrimination). Thus, counselors play a vital role in helping TIS identify their stress levels and in recognizing when mental health intervention is needed. Pedersen (1991) emphasized that counselors must go beyond their personal background and biases in a multicultural environment to better serve their international clients. They should be sensitive and positive towards TIS, as the latter's well-being depends on it. And although TIS have

useful support networks and some beneficial coping strategies to overcome harmful discrimination and stigma, they still feel threatened and have negative emotions and perceptions about themselves, and about in-group/out-group distinctions. Besides, the future of a positive atmosphere in universities is uncertain, and TIS could experience discriminatory threats at any time in universities due to their ethnic or religious identity. When these risks are taken into consideration, counselors should attempt to reach international students using various channels and keep them informed about available therapeutic, preventive, and guidance services.

In addition to these, in this study, it is understood that the sense of school belonging is a feeling that students need and facilitates their adaptation processes by affecting their well-being. In this regard, all university staff and local students have important roles. By underplaying the hierarchy and highlighting the friendly approach of university staff, especially supervisors, a more accepting atmosphere will create a sense of security for the students, making them feel part of the school. Furthermore, establishing contact between international and local students positively affects the adaptation process and the sense of belonging of the international students. In this regard, having joint projects in which locals and internationals take part together can increase the contact between the groups and make it easier for both parties to make friends in the university environment. Live chat clubs can be established similar to the clubhouse application on social media. Thus, students can be motivated to develop both the language of instruction and the local language. In this way, a platform where students may voice their common problems can be created. Such attempts by the school to increase relations between local and international students can be perceived as an indication of their acceptance of international students.

Besides, this study showed that students use the school setting not only for education but also for socializing, and therefore the physical facilities and their adequacy affect students' adaptation process. Sojkin, Bartkowiak and Skuza (2012) noted that the library facilities and learning materials of universities significantly affect student satisfaction. For this reason, arranging school facilities such as cafeterias and libraries in a way that will maximise the needs of the students, taking into account the current condition of these areas, may be of increased benefit to the students. Thus, it can contribute to students' spending more time at school and increasing their interaction with their peers. Improving school facilities will positively affect students' satisfaction and school belonging in the adaptation process.

Finally, as stated at the beginning of the research, no model specifically describes the adaptation and acculturation of international students. This study investigated the

multidimensional adaptation process of students with existing models, and it was revealed that there was a need to elaborate the impact of international student-specific contexts. The findings of this study suggest that revising existing models or creating a special theoretical framework for international students' adaptation is needed and it requires future research. Additionally, international higher education providers may leverage the current findings of this study as they develop constructive strategies and practices to attract and retain international students in response to growing demand.

On the other hand, the findings of this study brought up the necessity of examining the adaptation processes of students with different cultural backgrounds in the same host country and formed the basis for new research to be conducted in Hungary. The prevalence of such comparative studies will help to better understand the adaptation and acculturation process of international students.

Limitations

As with any research, some limitations of this study need to be considered due to the lack of current research regarding the adaptation of TIS in Hungary and Germany. Therefore, the interpretations of the results of this study may not be integrated with relevant literature to provide convergence or divergence. However, our studies pave the way for future researchers to conduct further comparative studies on TIS' adaptation in different countries. Also, the findings of the study are limited to the experiences of the small number of participants due to the nature of the qualitative research and should therefore be interpreted within the context of the present study.

In addition, most of the interviews were conducted in Turkish upon the request of the participants and were translated into English – due to a multinational research team – before the analysis process. Therefore, there may have been some loss of meaning in the statements of the participants. In order to minimize this loss of meaning, support was obtained from a professional translator service, and then the transcriptions were reviewed by the author and the translator, and a consensus was formed on the translations. On the other hand, as the researcher conducting these studies, I am Turkish and at the same time TIS and this gave me the opportunity to reach the participants quickly and easily, enabling them to express themselves with ease in their mother tongue during the interviews. Thoughts are embodied in language, and as seen in research findings, one of the major problems for TIS is the language barrier (e.g., limited vocabulary and misunderstanding in communication). As mentioned above, my being a researcher whose mother tongue is Turkish made it easier for the participants to express themselves fully and accurately, minimizing mutual misunderstandings

and allowing me to explore their inner experiences, feelings and thoughts, in depth. Furthermore, for example, in direct quotations in this study, it is seen that the participants frequently use words expressing intense emotional reactions such as 'weird', 'alien', 'feeling like a financial commodity'. Turkey is generally an emotion-oriented society and its people come and go between the extremes (Gercik, 2020). Something is either good/white or bad/black, there is no in-between/grey, and the intensity in the expression of negative emotions such as pain/sadness, especially in Turkish literature (song, poetry, etc.), is a distinctive feature specific to Turkish (Gercik, 2020). Turkish people tend to use more intense words when expressing themselves as a characteristic feature. Therefore, the intensity of emotional reactions in their expressions may be misunderstood/misinterpreted by a researcher from a different culture (e.g., existential threat). In this study, our analyses were carried out with this awareness, depending on 'context sensitivity' as much as possible (e.g., Yardley, 2017).

Moreover, I have been a TIS in the United Kingdom, whose official language is English, for two years, and in Hungary for eight years. As it is known, the researcher is a part of the qualitative research process and the influence of the researcher's subjectivity, prejudices, beliefs, language, and culture on the research process is inevitable (Sutton & Austin, 2015; Watt, 2007). Memos containing observations, ideas, and intuitions about participants' expressions for each interview session were reported in writing. I frequently write notes containing my own prejudices, expectations, feelings and thoughts before I start collecting data and during the study process, and I discuss and report on them with my supervisor, and also, more than one person has coded and analyzed the data. Despite this, it should be taken into account that my personal and cultural background may have been reflected in this research, to some extent.

Additionally, cross-cultural adaptation experiences of TIS based on their subjective perceptions may not ultimately reflect reality. However, possible misperceptions are also a part of their sojourn. Lastly, although "Skype" interviews helped with increasing participant honesty, it is possible that some nonverbal behaviors of the participants were missed for TIS in Germany and the United States. Nevertheless, this study succeeded in providing detailed insights into the adaptation process of TIS. One limitation of this study, however, is that coping strategies of TIS in Hungary and the United States were not examined in as much detail as a limitation of this study. Consequently, further studies are needed to investigate and analyze the phenomenon using different lenses in various host settings. Also, future research studies could compare and contrast the findings of this study.

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APPENDIX A

Information and Consent Sheet

Dear International Student,

You are participating in research led by Dr. Lan Anh NGUYEN LUU (Institute of Intercultural Psychology and Education, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest). The research is conducted by a team of researchers from the Institute of Intercultural Psychology and Education at ELTE.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE).

This research will allow us to explore the cultural experiences of international students studying in Hungary, Germany and the United States. It also allows us to reveal the factors influencing these experiences.

If you are an international student in Hungary, Germany or the United States, above the age of 18, and agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview conducted by a member of the research team. Questions concerning your experiences as an international student will be asked. Participation in this research is anonymous and voluntary. During the research, you are free to withdraw at any point without justification. In this case any data you have provided and records must be erased.

The interview will be voice-recorded and it will be transcribed into written text for later analysis. We inform you that we treat all information confidentially that is collected during the research. The audio materials of this study will be treated strictly confidentially. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. This consent form with your name and contact address will be securely stored by a third person independent from the researchers, separately from your answers to the interview questions. Qualitative analyses are performed on information collected in the research, and we ensure the respondents' anonymity.

You will never be identified in this research project or in any other presentation or publication. The information you provide will be coded by number only. Results of the research will be

submitted for publication in scientific journals or presented at scientific conferences. Verbal or written information will be provided about the findings at your request.

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. We would like to say thank you for your cooperation.

I have read information about this research and any questions I wanted to ask have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree with the conditions of the research.

Dated:………………………

Name: _____

Address/FB/email:_____

_____

Participant's signature

Any further question related to this research will be answered by Dr. Lan Anh NGUYEN LUU and the research team:

E-mail: international.students@ppk.elte.hu