



## UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTION AND EXPECTATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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### **Abstract:**

The current study aimed to investigate undergraduates' perception and expectation of university education, what degree their expectations were met, how they regard a qualified lecturer and what they think of their dream departments. The participants were 71 female undergraduates, ranging in age from 18 to 22 from Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Turkey, in the 2020 – 2021 Academic Year. Data were collected in written with open-ended questions and were performed content analysis. The participants' statements showed that a university mostly associates future anxiety and finance, a lecturer is expected to place importance on morality, science is the most expected aspect of a university, their departments mostly met what they have expected, and a university is supposed to meet learners' social needs. On the other hand, the number of the ones who could not find the chance to study at their dream departments due to some reasons is remarkable. Drawing upon the results, it may be recommended that undergraduates' perception of a university should be science rather than future anxiety and finance, their negative opinions about lecturers should be converted to positive, and if required, academic staff, principals and families should be given seminars in order to help meet undergraduates' positive expectations.

**Keywords:** perception of university, lecturer, expectation, science, future anxiety

### **1. Introduction**

Universities are means to prosperity of contemporary societies, indicators of social development level, and institutions to provide individuals with education and with possibility to investigate and socialize to help them get a job. They are also the most important institutions which help lecturers in self-improvement and in nurturing individuals in ethics and manners, in socializing and in preparing them for life by

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meeting their expectations and eliminating their anxieties for future. Furthermore, university education is the most important step in determining major field of study and future profession, and it affects individuals' life styles and choices of where to live.

Historically viewing, madrasahs, the symbols of the Ottoman Empire, may be given as the early examples of universities. As cornerstones of science and education, madrasahs kept their impact from the establishment of the Empire to the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Madrasahs equal to today's colleges. They were boarding schools and served to meet learners' needs. Madrasahs provided education of various disciplines such as religion, philosophy & logic, medicine, geography, geometry, mathematics, and astronomy. With the Declaration of Republic, there were dramatic changes in the field of education. Views of both native and foreigner experts were taken into account in creating and regulating new education politics (Sayılı, 2011; Unat, 1964; Taşdemirci 1989; Özodaşık, 1999; Arap, 2007).

Some undergraduates are teenagers who are not able to complete their adolescence and this is why future anxiety in this period is seen more, compared to other groups of ages (Bayrak, 2018). With commencing university education, teenagers become aware of the fact that a new term begins in their lives. They experience both the happiness of commencing university education and anxiety for future. Experiencing this complexity, they take a significant step for their future professional lives. Teenagers are not only educated by specialized lecturers but are also reminded of social values and find a chance to become socialized through physical and social possibilities of universities.

Throughout this stage, the ones who are expected to support undergraduates are their supervisors and lecturers. Teaching is quite different compared to other professions. A teacher is someone who is friendly, sensitive and who sheds light on learners' ways. Teachers' passion for teaching positively affects learners' attitudes towards learning. Our future will be shaped in our teachers' hands, intellectual capacities, conceptions and attitudes (Jeans, 1995).

The more teachers have faith in their learners, the more learners will be self-confident and successful. Therefore, teachers should have faith in their learners' success and whip them up to be successful. Thus, there seems a strong relation between teachers' expectations and learners' success (Brophy, 1981). It is normal that learners have expectations of teachers just like they expect of learners. Expectations should be mutually considered, and deficiencies should be eliminated and if there are flaws, they should be compensated.

## **2. Aim and Significance**

The current study was conducted to investigate undergraduates' expectations and perceptions of university education. It is expected to be significant in that it may be helpful for lecturers' self-improvement as a guide in taking concrete steps.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Design and Model

The current study was qualitatively designed and conducted. A qualitative research is generally preferred for deeper exploration of a specified subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Singh, 2007; Patton, 2014). Designed in phenomenological research, the data of the current study were collected with the interview technique and content-analyzed. Phenomenological design focuses on subjects for thorough exploration (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). In phenomenology, researchers enquire into participants' thoughts, conceptions, perceptions and expectations. Phenomenology is not generalizing but descriptive (Baş & Akturan, 2008).

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants were 71 female undergraduates, ranging in age from 18 to 22, from Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Child Development (Associate's Degree) in the 2020 – 2021 Academic Year. All participants voluntarily participated in the study. Table 1 presents participants' demographics.

**Table 1:** Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Number of Siblings</b>		
1	17	23.9
2	21	29.6
3 and more	33	46.5
<b>Family Marital Status</b>		
Together	63	88.7
Divorced	8	11.3
<b>Mother's Educational Background</b>		
Not literate	8	11.3
Primary	38	53.5
Elementary	12	16.9
High School	10	14.1
University	3	4.2
<b>Father's Educational Background</b>		
Not literate	2	2.8
Primary	29	40.8
Elementary	19	26.8
High School	15	21.1
University	6	8.5
<b>Order of university entry preference</b>		
First	20	28.2
Second	6	8.5
Third	4	5.6
Fourth and more	41	57.7
<b>Family income</b>		
Minimum wage and below	44	62.0
Above minimum wage – up to 5000 TL	22	31.0

5000 TL – 9.999 TL	5	7.0
<b>Voluntary university preference</b>		
Yes	60	84.5
No	11	15.5
<b>Grade</b>		
1	24	33.8
2	47	66.2
Total	71	100

### 3.3 Measures

A draft form, comprised of 6 open-ended questions, was developed and performed on 50 undergraduates for pilot study. Considering the pilot study results, the draft form was finalized with feedback from 3 lecturers and 3 teachers.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data of undergraduates' perceptions and expectations of a university and demographics were gathered via Google Forms.

### 3.5 Procedure

Data were analyzed with descriptive and content analysis. Participants were coded as P1, P2, P3 etc. Categories, codes and numbers extracted from the data analyses were elaborately displayed in tables and some findings were directly cited without any modifications so as to provide internal consistency.

## 4. Results

The participants' statements on the item "Explain what a university means to you, what it associates, and the reasons for it in a few sentence" were first coded, and then the codes were divided into categories. Table 2 presents the related information.

**Table 2:** Participants' Views on What a University Associates

Code	Category	N
Financial independence and a good life	Future anxiety and finance	34
Getting a job		19
Becoming more intellectual and conscious	Academic discipline	15

According to Table 2, two categories, namely future anxiety – finance and academic discipline, were fixed basing upon the participants' statements on what a university means to them and what it associates. 53 statements indicate future anxiety and finance and 15 indicate academic discipline. Regarding Table 2, it may be inferred that a university highly associates future anxiety and finance. Some of the participants' statements are as follows:

*"A better future. Future will give me the opportunity to be self-sufficient and to maintain a better life." (P24)*

*"University means being educated because it helps us master what is needed for our profession. It also helps us realize our potentials or get new skills and experiences." (P53)*

*"University means my future and my profession since it regulates my future and helps me get the job I wish." (P56)*

The participants' statements on the item "Define how a lecturer should be and give reasons for it in a few words" were first coded, and then the codes were divided into categories. Table 3 presents the related information.

**Table 3:** Participants' Views on How a Lecturer should be

Coding	Category	N
Sincere and modest	Values	13
Understanding and helpful		20
Just		7
Role model for learners		5
Young, active and leader-qualified	Quality	4
Highly skilled in communication and patient		6
Well-disciplined		8
Intellectual and experienced		12

According to Table 3, two categories, namely values and quality, were created basing upon the participants' opinions on how a lecturer should be. While 45 statements referred to values, 30 statements indicated quality. Regarding Table 2, it may be concluded that a quality lecturer should be the one who prioritizes moral and social values. Some of the participants' statements are as follows:

*"They must be just because a class without justice will no doubt have a negative effect on learners. They will be reluctant to express their ideas and participate in lesson." (P49)*

*"A lecturer should be authentic and qualified. What they think, explain, and exemplify should be contemporary, and they should share them with us effectively." (P67)*

*"I think a lecturer must be sincere but timely disciplined, helpful, chance-giving and trustworthy to give us the chance to express ourselves freely." (P68)*

The participants' answers to the item "What were your expectations of a university before you commenced studying?" were first coded, and then the codes were divided into categories. Table 4 displays the related information.

**Table 4:** Participants' Expectations of a University

Coding	Category	N
Having a quality education	Academic	31
Professional preparation with applied classes and enhancement in self-confidence		7
A nice campus	Physical and Financial	5
Opportunity for a job		8
Social activity facilities besides education	Socialization	5
Getting to know people of various cultures		10
Did not expect much		5

Drawing upon the participants' expectations of a university before they commenced it, three categories were fixed, namely academic, physical and financial, and socialization. 38 statements related to academic aspect, 15 statements defined socialization and 13 statements pointed to financial expectations. 5 of the participants did not express any specific expectations. According to the table, the participants' expectations are mostly related to academic. They also place importance on socialization. Some of the participants' answers are as follows:

*"I think there should be applied classes rather than theoretical ones because applied classes contribute more. People graduate from university having only theoretical classes but they lack practice when they start working." (P43)*

*"To me, a university means a quality education, a sense of success, good human affairs, a decent education environment and a good campus." (P49)*

*"A quality university is the one which has considerate and contributive lecturers along with its social activity facilities." (P69)*

The participants' answers to the item "Do you think your university met your expectations?" were first coded, and then the codes were divided into categories. Table 5 displays the related information.

**Table 5:** The Participants' Views on What Degree Their Expectations of University were Meet

Coding	Category	N
A well-conducted distance learning	Yes	7
Intellectual and understanding lecturers		17
A good campus and nice buildings		7
Adequate facilities		3
Love for the department		2
A quality education		9
Lack of face-to-face education due to the pandemic	Partially	11
Demand for a more quality education and more facilities		5
Inadequate social activities	No	3

The participants' statements on their expectations for the university they have been studying at extracted three categories as "yes, partially, no." Table 5 shows that most of the participants stated that their universities met their expectations. Some of the participants' statements are as follows:

*"I do not think my expectations were met but this was not because of the university itself. It was because of the Covid-19 since we could only attend classes for half a term. I had great time and efficient classes during this physical attendance, but distance learning is not pleasurable and efficient as expected."* (P14)

*"It was like I expected. I can even say more because our lecturers were very sincere and understanding. Perhaps, it is about that we are in the first grade, but I think our lecturers are qualified in distance teaching. They consider our circumstances as well."* (P26)

*"No. The university is OK in education, but it lacks physical and environmental quality. It does not provide activities for learners to spend their free time."* (P49)

The participants' answers to the item "What facilities should be available on a campus?" were first coded, and then the codes were divided into categories. Table 6 displays the related information.

**Table 6:** Participants' Statements on Facilities on a Campus

Coding	Category	N
A large social complex (café, restaurant, game field etc.)	Social Need	29
Grassy fields with benches		3
Music centers		3
Dormitory	Financial and Physical Need	3
Cheap and accessible transportation		2
Banks and ATMs		6
Market		5
Stationary		3
Sports fields and centers	Sports and Health	21
Health centers		5
Art workshops	Art-Technology-Science	3
Computer laboratories		3
A spacious library		18

According to Table 6, four categories were extracted as social needs, financial and physical needs, sports and health, and art-technology-science. 35 statements referred to social needs, 19 statements indicated financial and physical needs, 26 statements were related to sports and health, and 24 statements explained art-technology-science. Considering these, most of the participants may be said to think that social facilities (cafés, restaurants etc.) should be available on a university campus. Some of the participants' statements are as follows:

*"A campus should include dormitories, markets, sports centers, cafés and diners, and should also be convenient for cycling."* (P16)

*"Libraries, computer laboratories, cafés, markets and health centers should be available."* (P17)

*"Markets, swimming pools, sports centers, stationaries, dining places, libraries, chemist's and ATMs."* (P66)

The participants' answers to the item "Are you studying at the department you wished?" were first coded, and then the codes were divided into categories. Table 7 displays the related information.

**Table 7:** Participants' Views on Their Dream Department

Coding	Category	N
I love children and want to help them.	Yes	29
Teaching is a sacred occupation.		15
I think I will benefit from my department.		6
I was expecting to study at a different department.	No	17
I had a bigger dream but I did not want to wait a year more.		9

Table 7 displays that while 50 of the participants had positive regards for their departments, 26 expressed negative statements, meaning that most of them study at the department that they were dreaming. Some of the participants' statements are as follows:

*"Yes, because teaching is a very sacred job for me."* (P3)

*"Yes, I am studying at my dream department. I voluntarily study at Child Development because I believe children are our future. I wish this new generation to be well-educated and beneficial to the society. I am confident that I can teach them well. I love children and I preferred this department."* (P22)

*"No, because my dream department was Nursing."* (P71)

## 5. Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

University is both in dreams and a bridge to dreams. It is also expected to set suitable circumstances to socialize and to take steps for youthfulness. Therefore, it is fairly natural that young people not only have dreams for university education, but they also have expectations of university life, lecturers and possibilities. A university is in charge of providing the optimum education for learners. Thus, it is supposed to enhance physical, social, academic and economical requirements to the optimum level and present them to learners. Hence, it is necessary that recommendations, criticisms and demands should be



evaluated in order to meet learners' expectations of university and lecturers. The current study may have yielded genuine results in that direction.

The results of what a university means to participants and what it associates were mostly about future anxiety and finance. In fact, the results were expected to relate to academic discipline but life conditions, social roles and expectations, and personal goals and dreams are thought to be the reasons for prioritizing future anxiety and finance. In line with this, Ertem & Arı (2016) found that a university associates an institution which raises independent, responsible and wise individuals.

The results of how a lecturer should be showed that a lecturer is expected to be qualified. However, what was more valuable than that was a lecturer who places importance on values, and who is intimate, humble, understanding, helpful and just. Similar to current results, Saydan's (2008) study showed that learners expected two fundamental criteria of a lecturer: the first is a lecturer's qualifications and academic performance, and the second is sound communication with learners. Ekinçi & Burgaz (2007) also found that learners expected of lecturers that they should help in self-improvement and positive intellectual development, serve career planning guidance and become a role model.

The results of what participants expected a university before commencing it were that a university is expected to provide a quality education, prepare them for professional life with applied classes and support their improvement in self-confidence. In addition, the participants expected a good campus and social facilities. Similarly, Kostenius (2011) found that learners' dream university was the one which had facilities and services to provide socialization and had understanding, positive and prudent lecturers. Also, Korukoğlu (2003) found that learners expected a more practice-oriented education. Besides, Korukoğlu (2003) also found that learners' most important expectation was to get a job.

The results of what participants expected of the university they have been studying were positive since lecturers have been good at distance teaching and they are qualified, and the campus is fine and has adequate social facilities although some participants were not content with distance learning. Similarly, Demirtaş & Çoban (2014) found that participants had positive regards for universities, and that universities had positive changes and development.

What social facilities participants expected on a campus were sports fields, health centers, libraries, and organizations providing financial support. Similarly, Okumuş & Duygun (2008) state that physical, social and educational conditions of a university should be promoted in order to increase learners' contentment, and while doing so, learners' expectations and ideas should be taken into account.

Although the results of whether the participants are studying at their dream departments were positive due to some reasons like they feel love for children and they think their department will help them get a job, there were also participants who were not content with their departments just because they could not get the chance to study at their dream departments.

Basing upon the study results, the followings may be recommended:

- The current study was limited to 71 female undergraduates studying at Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Child Development department. Further studies may be conducted at various universities in various programs and departments with larger samples.
- The current study was limited to undergraduates' perceptions and expectations of a university. Further studies may be conducted on examining undergraduates', parents' and lecturers' perceptions and expectations and they may be compared to each other.
- The current study results were limited to 6 open-ended questions. Further studies may include more open-ended questions.
- The results may be instructive for lecturers and principals in self-improvement. Accordingly, they may be given concise and effective seminars.
- The physical conditions of universities may be fostered drawing upon the study results, new buildings and facilities may be built.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declare no conflicts of interest.

### About the Author

Dr. Mehmet Şaban Akgül is an Assistant Professor at Department of Child Care and Youth Services at Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, he got his doctoral degree from Ondokuzmayıs University University, Institute of Educational Sciences in 2018. His doctoral dissertation titled "The definition of the consciousness level of 3rd and 4th grade primary school students about child rights: A scale development work". His research interests are: preschool education, child development, classroom education, personal development, children's rights, teaching, inclusion education, classroom management.

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