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Exploring The Role of Organizational Culture in University Students' Quality of Life: A Case from Private Higher Education

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Abstract

Students' quality of life (QoL) is shaped by individual and environmental factors, which are important for promoting engagement and academic achievement. In higher education, organizational culture is a key environmental factor that may influence students' well-being. This study examined the role of university culture in undergraduate students' QoL. Participants were 617 students from three foundation universities in Ankara. QoL was assessed using the World Health Organization Quality of Life Brief Version (WHOQOL-BREF), while university culture types were identified with the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). Ordinal regression analyses were conducted to examine the effects of university culture types on QoL domains, controlling for demographic variables. Results showed that innovative team culture significantly predicted the physical health and social relationship domains of QoL. These findings suggest that university culture may contribute to students' QoL and highlight the need for further research on organizational culture as a factor shaping student well-being.

Key Words: University students, quality of life, organizational culture, university culture, higher education

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Introduction

The quality of educational systems and their impact on student experiences have become a global priority (Wong & Chapman, 2023). Higher education institutions emphasize improving the student quality of life (QoL) and contentment due to their effects on academic performance and satisfaction (Bailey & Miller, 1998; Cheung, 2000; Donald et al., 2024; Elliott & Shinn, 2002). Experts indicate several major external factors that exhibit a strong relationship with self-reported QoL measurements among university students. One group of factors is the presence of a range of services and related facilities (e.g., libraries, transportation, and health centers) on campus grounds (Sirgy et al., 2007; Yu & Kim, 2008). In addition to physical environments, meaningful intimate social interactions and recreational activities improve several aspects of QoL at undergraduate level (Seibel & Johnson, 2001; Tonon, 2021). In the cultural domain, however, the psychological effects of the social roles within an organizational structure such as a higher education institution is inherently multilayered, thus more difficult to address with respect to QoL.

Organizational culture is mostly considered within the context of private industries and governmental bodies due to its influence on productivity in the workplace (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Trompenaars & Wooliams, 2004). Four major culture types – clan/team, hierarchical, adhocracy, and market/competitive, were derived from this framework (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Lincoln, 2003; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981). Since the worldwide growth in higher education sector both in the public and private domains intensified global competition among higher education organizations, the concept of organizational culture has also been applied to higher education systems (Fralinger & Olson, 2007; Öztürk & Dayıoğlu, 2024). However, universities are characterized by different sets of objectives and values, which distinguish them from other organizations (Tilak, 2024). The first researcher who investigated the relationship between university effectiveness and culture is Clark (1972). According to his concept of *organizational sagas*, all shareholders (i.e., active students as well as alumni) believe in the same university-wide myths and identifiers, resulting in common goals and values among its members. Later, this approach developed into a more technical framework by using the same methodologies implemented

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in the broader organizational research (Masland, 1985; Sporn, 1996; Tierney & Lanford, 2015), culminating in the emergence of Competitive Values Framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Over the years, the scholarly work on the effects of university culture on institutional performance has extended to include its outcomes vis-à-vis student success (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Dill, 1982; Gaus, 2019; Sergiovanni, 2008). One group of outcomes has been reported to be college life satisfaction, student belonging and engagement (Hoy et al., 1990; Miller, 1993; Resnick, 2001; Sirgy et al., 2007; Yu & Kim, 2008). Recently, the role of university culture in student college life satisfaction has gained scholarly attention. Since culture is an ever-changing dynamic construct, it has been established that culture within privately funded universities may yield different outcomes concerning student health and success (Tierney & Lanford, 2015; Tilak, 2024). Beyond student-related outcomes, the concept of organizational culture in higher education offers a valuable lens for understanding how management operates within institutions. It equips administrators with insights into how cultural factors can be leveraged to address concrete organizational challenges (Tierney, 1988). Consequently, examining the specific cultural dimensions of higher education both in the public and private arena can illuminate the ways institutional culture influences students' experiences and overall well-being. Nonetheless, this phenomenon has not received sufficient scholarly attention in the global arena.

This study aimed to investigate the effects of university culture types on student QoL at three privately funded foundation universities in Ankara, Turkey. As an underexplored nation, Turkey provides a unique opportunity to assess student achievement and well-being in higher education, as there is a deep divide between socio-economic backgrounds of students attending public vs. privately funded institutions (Arslan & Bektaş, 2019). Furthermore, most of the work on Turkish undergraduate students has focused on public universities and students' college life dissatisfaction in the domain of social relationship has been associated with hierarchical culture type in Turkish public higher education (Çalışkan & Zhu, 2019). It is therefore possible that university culture types can have drastically different effects on student QoL in private education, providing a foundation for future comparative work. Hierarchical and market (competitive) cultures were expected to negatively affect QoL, whereas clan (team) culture was expected to have a positive effect on students' QoL.

University Culture

Given that university culture is considered among the factors affecting the survival of higher education systems, studies on organizational culture raised the issue of evaluating the quality of higher education systems and college life satisfaction (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi, 1981; Sporn, 1996). The first researcher who investigated the relationship between effectiveness of a university and its culture is Clark (1972). He investigated the factors impacting university culture. He believed that culture is among the building blocks of higher education systems. Therefore, he supported the idea that one can evaluate the effectiveness of higher education institutions by investigating their culture (Clark, 1972). His early work on university culture has gradually led to the emergence of student-related outcomes of culture in higher education. Recently, culture in higher education systems, both public and private, has undergone a revival. With the rapid advancement of globalization, research on university culture has been the focus of attention within the context of internationalization (Tierney, 2015). Several universities have begun to open branches abroad, but not all have been able to survive. It is possible to conclude that inadequate research on the culture of the higher education system in a different context has caused some international campuses to close their doors due to a lack of student registration (Tierney, 2015). Therefore, university culture has become the center of attention for higher education professionals and researchers more than ever. For this reason, it is required to focus on the relationship between university culture and academic outcomes such as student QoL and college life satisfaction. Investigating students' QoL in relation to university culture is one way to manage student satisfaction, especially in the competitive private education sector of the 21st century (Tilak, 2024; Yu & Kim, 2008).

QoL of University Students

QoL has various definitions in existing literature. Chekola (1974) defined life satisfaction as living by ones' standards, wishes and goals assessed by the individual. According to Bradburn (2015), happiness and subjective well-being are defined as the affective state, where there are more individual positive experiences than negative. 1990s and 2000s onwards, with the expansion of higher education institutions and an increase in enrolment rates, studies conducted on student QoL have gained popularity after the introduction of student satisfaction measures (Opatz, 1986). Hettler developed the Lifestyle Assessment Questionnaire to assess the QoL and well-being of university students in 1979. His work revealed a hexagon model of well-being, which are physical, spiritual, emotional, occupational, intellectual and social well-being (Hettler, 1980). Recent studies followed the concept

defined by World Health Organization. WHOQOL-BREF scale was employed to measure students' QoL (Ducinskiene et al., 2003; Li & Zhong, 2022). World Health Organization (2004) defines QoL as: "individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns" (p. 21). Studies conducted on the factors affecting student QoL and life satisfaction in 1990s and early 2000s have identified age, physical health, lifestyle, study style, parenting style to be effective factors on students' QoL (Bailey & Miller,1998; Cha, 2003). Personality traits and self-esteem were identified to predict high life satisfaction (Yetim, 2003). Additionally, the socio-economic status of the student is also considered to be an important predictor of QoL. For example, students with high-income families were reported to have an elevated QoL (Chow, 2005). Additionally, QoL and academic satisfaction are positively correlated (Bailey & Miller, 1998; Elliott & Shinn, 2002). Therefore, high student QoL is associated with high academic performance and low rates of academic procrastination (Chow, 2005; Lodi et al., 2017).

University and QoL

Higher education and organizational culture experts have identified a strong relationship between the facilities offered to students and students' overall QoL (Sirgy et al., 2007; Tonon, 2021; Yu & Kim, 2008). Sirgy et al. (2007) investigated the impact of the social and academic aspects of college life satisfaction on students' overall feelings of college life. Their research revealed that college facilities and services such as libraries, transportation, parking services and healthcare facilities influence students' self-evaluations on college life satisfaction. Sirgy et al. (2007)'s research showed that college life quality and life satisfaction are positively correlated. Tonon (2021) investigated the relationship between university facilities and Argentinian college students' QoL. Her study showed that university students view intimate relationships at university as a source of social support (Tonon, 2021). In addition, she found that leisure activities seemed to have a positive influence on undergraduate students' QoL. It was also reported that receiving university education was considered by students as a way of improving their socio-economic status. On the other hand, in the same study, condition of the school building, inflexible scheduling, crowded classes, expenses related to transportation, textbooks and school cafeteria were regarded as unfavorable influences on students' QoL. In addition to the physical conditions such as the services and the facilities, university culture is also among the factors impacting students' QoL. Çalışkan and Zhu (2019) found that Turkish students at public universities preferred a more approachable higher management which attends to their concerns. They concluded that a less hierarchical culture and more student-centered atmosphere will cause elevated student satisfaction levels. Drawing on current literature, it can be concluded that students' college experiences have an influence on their QoL. This conclusion is supported by the bottom-up spillover approach, which is based on the premise that satisfaction with one aspect of life impacts on the other domains of QoL. Table 1 presents a summary of the conceptual framework.

Table 1

Conceptual Framework

Construct	Key Dimensions	Importance
University Culture	Hierarchical, market, team Facilities and student support systems Academic and social environment	Considered a foundational factor influencing the functioning and effectiveness of higher education institutions and shaping student experiences.
Student Quality of Life (QoL)	Physical health Psychological/emotional well-being Social relationships Socio-economic background Environment	Positively influenced by university culture and institutional conditions; higher QoL is associated with better academic performance and satisfaction.
College Life Satisfaction	Academic satisfaction Social belonging and engagement Student–faculty relationships	A behavioral outcome of students' perceived QoL and an indicator of institutional effectiveness.

Note. The conceptual framework proposes that *university culture* indirectly influences *college life satisfaction* through its impact on students' *QoL*. This aligns with the bottom-up spillover model, suggesting that satisfaction in specific life domains contributes to overall well-being.

Methods

Survey

Turkish undergraduate students (n = 617) from three foundation universities were invited via email advertisements. The online survey was administered using Google Forms. Before entering the survey, participants were required to fill out a consent form. All data collection was approved by the University Ethics Board (No: E-66777842-300-00003283648). The survey was available from January to June 2024. The survey consisted of two scales and a list of demographic questions. The Turkish version of World Health Organization Quality of Life Brief Version (WHOQOL-BREF-TR) was used to assess student QoL (Eser et al., 1999; WHO, 2004). The scale included 27 items, which were on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very dissatisfied*/*never*, 5 = *very satisfied*/*always*). It measures the four domains of QoL: physical domain (10 items, e.g., "Do you have enough energy for everyday life?"), psychological domain (six items, e.g., "How often do you have negative feelings such as blue mood, despair, anxiety, depression?"), social interactions domain (three items, e.g., " How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?") and environment domain (nine items, e.g., "How satisfied are you with your transport?"). To assess the validity of WHOQOL-BREF-TR, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted and the analysis revealed a good model fit X^2 = 309.504, df = 84, p <. 00, *RMSEA* = .06, *CFI* = .90, *TLI* = .88). In addition, the internal consistency of the four dimensions was identified to be robust, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .76, .80, .77, and .79, respectively. The Turkish adaptation of Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) was employed to measure the students' perception of university culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Köse & Korkmaz, 2019). The questionnaire was composed of 24 items, which were on a 7-point rating scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Three types of university culture were assessed in the instrument: hierarchical culture type (six items, e.g., "My university is a strictly structured and rigidly controlled place, where people's actions are driven by official procedures."), innovative team culture type (12 items, e.g., "My university management encourages cooperation and teamwork."), market culture type (six items, e.g., "The managerial structure of my university promotes fierce competition, high expectations and achievements."). To assess the validity of the University Culture Assessment Instrument, CFA was conducted. It revealed a good model fit (X^2 = 735.043, df = 132, p = .00, *RMSEA* = .08, *CFI* = .90, *TLI* = .89). Furthermore, the internal consistency of the three dimensions was identified to be within the acceptable range, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .66, .89, and .64.

Measures

Five variables were quantified as categorical data. These include gender (female/male), economic status (low/middle/high-income), bursary (yes/no), residence (home/flat/university hall), and sibling (yes/no).

Statistical Analysis

The analysis is composed of three parts. All analyses were conducted via R v. 4.3.3 (R Core Team, 2024). In the first part, descriptive statistics were calculated using the *DescTools* package (Signorell, 2024, v. 0.99.58) to examine the domains of students' QoL and the prevailing culture type at the university. As four domains of QoL (i.e. the dependent variables) were essentially ordered categories, consisting of five response levels (Bürkner & Vuorre, 2019), ordinal regression analysis was implemented using the *ordinal* package (Christensen, 2023, v. 2023.12-4) to address the research question. The effects of demographic characteristics such as gender, sibling, economic status, residence and bursary were controlled, and they were included as covariates in the main model. Using the QoL ratings for each domain (physical health, psychological health, social relationship and environment) as the dependent variables and scores for the three university culture types (hierarchical, innovative team and competitive) as independent variables, twelve regression models were generated (See Supplementary Material). Additionally, driven by theoretical interest in the effect of university on students' QoL, differences in students' perceptions of their (QoL) across universities were also examined. Therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted using the "ggstatsplot" package (Patil, 2021) in R Studio (version 4.3.3).

Results

Participants

Data was collected from three foundation universities located in Ankara. This choice was guided by both contextual and practical considerations. As the capital city of Turkey, Ankara hosts a diverse range of higher

education institutions that attract students from various regions, providing a representative setting for examining university students' QoL. Additionally, the researcher's institutional affiliation in Ankara made data collection more feasible and ensured adequate participation within the available timeframe.

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants. In total, 617 students provided complete responses to the survey. Of this sample, two hundred and sixty-five (43%) were males and three hundred and fifty-two (57%) were female students. Four hundred and eighty-five students (78%) came from middle class families, while 95 (16%) were from high-income families. 528 (85%) students received a certain discount on the total tuition fee and therefore were qualified as bursary receiving students. 406 (65%) students resided at family home, 91(15%) lived in a flat away from parents, and 120 (20%) students stayed in university halls on campus. Finally, 527 (85.4%) students reported that they had siblings, while 90 (14.16%) of them said they were unique children.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		*n* (617)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	265	43
Economic Status	Female	352	57
Bursary	Low	37	6
Residence	Middle	48	78
Sibling	High	95	16
University	Yes	528	85

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents the descriptive findings. The participants reported the highest scores for the physical health domain of QoL (M = 4.13, SD = 1.01). The environment domain followed the physical health domain (M = 3.71, SD = 0.86). On the other hand, the psychological health domain received the lowest scores (M = 3.35, SD = 0.98), followed by the social relationship domain (M = 3.48, SD = 1.08). In the case of university culture types, the participants reported the highest scores on competitive culture type (M = 4.51, SD = 1.5), and the lowest scores on innovative team culture (M = 3.81, SD = 1.42), followed by hierarchy culture type (M = 4.41, SD = 1.44).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of QoL Domains and University Culture Types

Variable	*M* (*SD*)
1. Psychological domain	3.35 (.98)
2. Physical health domain	4.13 (1.01)
3. Environment domain	3.71 (.86)
4. Social interactions domain	3.48 (1.08)
5. Hierarchy culture type	4.41 (1.44)
6. Innovative team culture type	3.81 (1.42)

Predictors of QoL

Table 4 presents the culture type predicting students' QoL. Accounting for several demographic factors such as economic status and gender, innovative team culture was identified to be a significant predictor of two domains of students' QoL. It significantly predicts the physical health (B = .15 [.04,.25], p = .00, p < .01) and social relationships domains of students' QoL (B = .12 [.01, .22], p = .02, p < .05). Economic status was identified as another important predictor of students' QoL. It predicts the physical health (B = .82 [.19, 1.44], p = .01) and social relationships (B = 1.00 [.38, 1.63], p = .00) domains of students' QoL. In addition to economic status, gender was found to have a significant effect on the physical health domain (B = -.30 [-.60, -.00], p = .04). The Kruskal–Wallis test results revealed a statistically significant difference in students' perceptions of the physical health dimension of QoL across the three foundation universities ($\chi^2(2)$ = 12.21, p < .001). The use of a non-parametric test was warranted, as the data did not satisfy the assumptions of normality required for parametric analyses, and the dependent variable was measured on an ordinal scale. To further examine intergroup differences, the estimated marginal means were calculated for each group. The findings indicated that students enrolled at University C (*EMM* = 2.12) reported higher levels of physical health–related (QoL) compared to those studying at University A (*EMM* = 1.82) and University B (*EMM* = 1.41).

Table 4

Ordinal Regression Models Predicting Student Quality of Life Domains

(A)		~ Physical Health Domain		
		B(95% CI)	OR(95%CI)	*p*
Fixed Effects	Innovative Team Culture	0.15(0.04, 0.25)	1.16(01.05,1.29)	0.00**
	Sibling	-0.10(-0.53, 0.31)	0.90(0.59,1.37)	0.61
	Gender	-0.30(-0.60, -0.00)	0.74(0.54,1.00)	0.04*
	Economic Status	0.82(0.19, 1.44)	2.27(1.21,4.26)	0.01*
	Residence	0.05(-0.36, 0.48)	1.06(0.69,1.62)	0.79
	Bursary	-0.27(-0.69, 0.14)	0.76(0.50,1.15)	0.19
			Variance	
Model Performance	*χ2*	32.01		
	Nagelkerke Pseudo-R^2	0.05		
(B)		~ Social Relationships Domain		
		B(95% CI)	OR(95%CI)	*p*
Fixed Effects	Innovative Team Culture	0.12(0.01, 0.22)	1.13(1.02, 1.26)	0.02*
	Sibling	0.00(-0.40,0.41)	1.01(0.67, 1.51)	0.97
	Gender	0.08(-0.20,0.37)	1.09(0.81, 1.46)	0.57
	Economic Status	1.00(0.38,1.63)	2.74(1.46,5.12)	0.00**
	Residence	-0.06 (-0.48,0.35)	0.94(0.62,1.42)	0.76
	Bursary	0.13(-0.27,0.54)	1.15(0.76 ,1.73)	0.5
			Variance	
Model Performance	*χ2*	-62.35		
	Nagelkerke Pseudo-R^2	0.05		

Note. Model estimates of the ordinal regression models with university culture types and demographics as main effects on the physical health and social relationships domains of student quality of life (QoL). Model performance was assessed by comparing the main model to a null model with random effects (see χ^2). B = coefficient estimates with 95% confidence intervals. OR = odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. *p < .05, **p < .01

Discussion

The lowest QoL scores among undergraduate students at the three foundation universities were observed in the psychological and social relationships domains. A similar finding was identified among European universities (Arbues et al., 2022). On the other hand, Canadian students reported high levels of contentment on the social relationship domain of QoL (Chow, 2005). In the case of university culture, the results of the present study demonstrate that students at foundation universities in Turkey consider the culture type to be competitive culture. While the highly centralized and bureaucratic structure of Turkish higher education system is indicative of a predominantly hierarchical organizational culture within public universities, as perceived by academic staff (Aktan & Aydıntan, 2016; Erdem et al., 2010), the findings of the present study reveal a divergent pattern,

suggesting that foundation universities are perceived by students as being characterized by a more competitive culture. In this regard, the present study offers a meaningful contribution to the existing body of literature.

To address the research question, predictors of students' QoL at foundation universities were examined in relation to university culture types. The results of the current study revealed significant effects on students' QoL. Innovative team culture type was identified to predict the physical health and social relationship domains of students' QoL positively. Innovative team culture is associated with increased organizational commitment. Cameron and Quinn's (2011) findings revealed a strong association between clan or team-oriented cultures and higher levels of employee engagement. Similarly, such cultures have been shown to foster faculty members' and students' academic engagement and attachment to their institutions (Fralinger & Olson, 2007). Within the context of the neoliberal higher education system, university students can also be conceptualized as customers, whose satisfaction and engagement are increasingly viewed as key indicators of institutional performance and competitiveness (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005).

On the other hand, existing studies on university culture and student well-being highlight that students' mental health suffers in highly competitive environments (Byrnes et al., 2020; Colenbrender et al., 2020; Tempski et al., 2012). Therefore, competitive culture at university is considered to decrease the efficiency of the university and student engagement (Kozak & Klement, 2025). Our findings are also supported by the *bottom-up spillover* theory (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, 1976; Diener et al., 1999). This theory posits that life satisfaction in one domain is associated with all other subdimensions of QoL (e.g., satisfaction with family, social life, physical and mental health, etc.). In line with this theory, our research findings demonstrate that students' perceptions of the present culture at university can cause a significant change in students' evaluations of their QoL in some domains.

Economic status and gender were identified as demographic predictors of students' QoL. Family economic status significantly predicted the physical health and social relationships domains of students' QoL. Various studies confirm the impact of economic status on university students' QoL (Bergmann et al., 2019; Claridge & Ussher, 2019; Harrison et al., 2018; Mason, 2017). For example, not having enough resources for living expenses such as accommodation and transportation costs is likely to decrease a student's QoL (Tempski et al., 2012; Tonon, 2021; Weber et al., 2019). In addition, our findings reveal that economic status affects a student's satisfaction with their social lives as well. Several studies highlight that being able to establish meaningful social interactions (e.g., joining social events regularly) results in increased satisfaction with the social relationships domain of student QoL (Arbues et al., 2022; Chow, 2005; Claridge & Ussher, 2019). In the case of gender, significant differences were identified between male and female students in the physical health domain of QoL. This may result from the fact that female students are less physically active compared to males during their time at university (Pirinççi et al., 2020).

The variations in students' perceptions of physical health across the three foundation universities may be partly attributed to the "smoke-free campus" policy implemented at University C. Introduced in 2018, this policy progressively restricts smoking in all indoor and outdoor areas of the campus (University C, internal policy document, 2018). Furthermore, students who participate in classes conducted within the university's sports facilities receive academic credit for their engagement in these activities. The inclusion of GE100 points for such participation may have also contributed to students' higher self-reported levels of physical health at University C. This credit-based incentive likely serves as a motivating factor, encouraging students to engage in regular physical activity and thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction with their physical well-being.

Oftentimes, unconscious values inherent in institutions can be embedded in certain academic cultures, namely collegial, managerial, negotiating and developmental (Bergquist, 1994). While the traditional managerial culture emphasizes a rather bureaucratic and rigid ways of managing, collegial culture prioritizes relationships among faculty members, but students` needs are not considered. The focus is on the faculty, and not the students (Bergquist, 1994). As a reaction to both the traditional managerial and collegial cultures, negotiating and developmental cultures focus on shared decision-making, shared power, autonomy, collaboration and innovation. Our results reveal that unlike the traditional rigid managerial culture, a mix of negotiating and developmental cultures based on autonomy, consensus, innovation and negotiation could impact students` lived experiences at university and thus their QoL positively. Consequently, drawing upon the findings of current study, it is recommended that university administrators foster an innovative team culture grounded in cooperation and consensus within their institutions. Students can benefit from certain academic and social support programs. Through peer-coaching and mentoring programs, students can establish intimate friendships, develop social ties with their peers and improve their academic performance (Gershenfeld, 2014). Improving student satisfaction in

the social relationship domain of QoL results in increased student engagement and academic success (Tonon, 2021). The significant effects of innovative team culture on the physical health domain of student QoL indicate that this culture type might be a contributing factor in improved physical health as well. By improving the quality of services and facilities on campus grounds, universities might play a significant role in helping correct the socio-economic disparities among university students in the physical health domain. Furthermore, it is recommended that university administrations consider expanding their financial aid and bursary programs to help students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Harrison et al., 2018). As a result, having less issues to be concerned about, students from low-income families can fully concentrate on their academic studies (Weber et al., 2019).

Overall, the in-depth analysis of the role of university culture types and students' QoL presented by current study builds upon previous studies. It also provides insights for higher education administrators in the private domain and policy makers to improve the effectiveness of their organizational culture and elevate students' QoL in private higher education. Based on the findings, university administrators are offered recommendations for the development of strategic plans targeting at increasing students' QoL in private higher education.

Given that university culture is context-specific, our findings are limited to Turkish undergraduate students at three foundation universities in Ankara (Arbues et al., 2022; Çalışkan & Zhu, 2019). Future studies could encompass both public and private sectors, comparing the role of organizational culture on both faculty and students' QoL. Finally, as this research is cross-sectional, results cannot provide causal insights (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Therefore, future researchers are advised to conduct longitudinal survey research. It should also be noted that student experiences related to their well-being are dependent on a variety of factors that are time specific (Wong & Chapman, 2023). Therefore, evaluating and assessing QoL of students should become a part of the life-long learning process for universities to improve students' QoL and well-being.

Conclusion

Our study is one of the first to analyze the effect of culture types on university students' QoL, particularly in the context of private higher education. Educational experts have investigated culture in higher education mainly to measure institutional performance. Our results suggest that organizational culture, when adapted to campus life at foundation universities, can explain some of the challenges students face vis-à-vis their well-being. Investing in student QoL in private higher education enabled us to explore that students view competitive culture type to be the present culture in private higher education systems; however, only innovative team culture was identified to predict student QoL positively. Nevertheless, there remains the question to what extent student success is affected by specific university culture types. Therefore, university administrators and policy makers are encouraged to measure their students' QoL so that they can identify which domains (i.e., physical health, social relationship, etc.) need administrative attention for improved academic achievement. It is advisable that future studies examine college life satisfaction in relation to individual variables such as self-efficacy, academic engagement, and sense of belonging to the university.

The effect of demographic factors on student QoL at foundation universities is another aspect worth mentioning. It is established that the social gap among students affects college life satisfaction. Our study suggests that this discrepancy is also predictive of different QoL levels among students. Male students coming from high-income families reported higher QoL on the physical health and social relationship domains. The implications of this aspect are yet to be explored. Therefore, private higher education institutions are encouraged to further investigate the future implications of this social gap related to QoL upon student performance for the development of a more inclusive private higher education system.

Code of Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University on 29/12/2023, with approval number E-66777842-300-00003283648.

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Örgüt Kültürünün Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yaşam Kalitesi Üzerindeki Rolünün İncelenmesi: Vakıf Üniversiteleri Örneği

Özet

Öğrencilerin yaşam kalitesi, bireysel ve çevresel birçok faktörden etkilenmektedir. Bu faktörlerin belirlenmesi, öğrencilerin öğrenme süreçlerine katılımını desteklemek ve akademik başarılarını artırmak açısından önemlidir. Yükseköğretimde örgüt kültürü, öğrencilerin yaşam kalitesini etkileyebilecek temel çevresel faktörlerden biridir. Bu çalışmada, üniversite kültürünün lisans öğrencilerinin yaşam kalitesi üzerindeki rolü incelenmiştir. Araştırmaya Ankara'daki üç vakıf üniversitesinde öğrenim gören 617 lisans öğrencisi katılmıştır. Yaşam kalitesi, Dünya Sağlık Örgütü Yaşam Kalitesi Kısa Formu ile; üniversite kültürü ise Üniversitelerde Örgüt Kültürü Değerlendirme Aracı ile ölçülmüştür. Üniversite kültür tiplerinin yaşam kalitesi boyutları üzerindeki etkilerini belirlemek amacıyla sıralı regresyon analizleri yapılmıştır. Demografik değişkenler kontrol edildiğinde, yenilikçi takım kültürünün bedensel sağlık ve sosyal ilişkiler boyutlarını anlamlı düzeyde etkilediği bulunmuştur. Bulgular, üniversite kültürünün öğrencilerin yaşam kalitesi üzerinde etkili olabileceğini göstermektedir. Vakıf üniversitelerinde örgüt kültürünün öğrenci iyi oluşundaki rolünü inceleyen çalışmaların artırılması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Üniversite öğrencileri, yaşam kalitesi, örgüt kültürü, üniversite kültürü, yükseköğretim