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Research Article

Coping Styles, Social Support, Relational Self- Construal, and Resilience in Predicting Students' Adjustment to University Life*

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to investigate how well coping styles, social support, relational self-construal, and resilience characteristics predict first year university students' ability to adjust to university life. Participants consisted of 527 at-risk students attending a state university in Turkey. The Personal Information Form, Risk Factors Defining List, Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale, Perceived Social Support Scale, Coping Styles Scale-Brief Form, and Resiliency Scale were used to collect data for the current study. In order to test the data, several hierarchical multiple regression analysis composed of seven different steps was conducted, the results of which indicate that relational self-construal, perceived social support, coping styles, and resilience in college students with certain risk characteristics have a significant predicting role on adjustment to university life. Among all independent variables, resilience characteristics were the most effective at predicting adjustment to university life and its sub-dimensions. Results were discussed in the light of the literature and various suggestions for future studies were included.

Keywords

Coping styles • Social Support • Relational Self-construal • Resilience • Adjustment in university life

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According to data from the Assessment Selection and Placement Center, each year approximately two million students take tests in order to gain admission into universities. From among these students, almost one million are placed in either two- or four-year majors in Turkey (Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi [ÖSYM], 2015). Being away from the families for what is most likely the first time, students must deal with many issues and challenges during this period. During this process, freshmen face many new challenges, such as learning how to be an autonomous adult, adjusting in an environment considerably different from that which they had experienced in high school, standing on their own two feet, managing their finances, and taking care of a variety of their own basic needs (washing clothes, ironing, cooking, etc.) that their parents used to, not to mention adjusting to the university and its culture (R. W. Baker, McNeil, & Siryk, 1985; Fassig, 2003). In addition, when students are faced with intense academic study (S. R. Baker, 2004) and the process of building new friendships (Salami, 2011) at the same time, university life may become even more complicated for students.

Research on university students emphasizes that a number of undesired outcomes, such as homesickness, anxiety, depression, over emotionality, failure, and dropout, may occur as a result of the stress felt by university students (Banyard & Cantor, 2004; Bülbül, 2012; Dyson & Renk, 2006; Şimşek, 2013; Thurber & Walton, 2012). Therefore, students experiencing personal, emotional, social, and academic problems during the university adjustment process is mentioned (Aladağ, Kağnıcı, Tuna, & Tezer, 2003).

Since it requires one to transition from a familiar environment to another one that is not only physically, but also socially new, university life includes many stress causing agents (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). Recent research indicates that at-risk students, such as freshmen, those with low SES, and students with disabilities, have higher stress and anxiety levels than their peers (Allison, 2015). In this regard, many researchers have stated that coping styles play a significant role in students' ability to manage stress (Aldwin, 2004; Cross, 1995). Studies on freshmen in particular (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Gardner, Krägeloh, & Henning, 2014; Herman & Tetrick, 2009; Yalın, 2007; Yiqun, Yueqin, & Yiwen, 2010) have indicated that while some coping styles positively contributed to university adjustment, others just rendered the process more difficult. For instance, Brissette, Scheier, and Carver (2002) found that students' ability to adjust to their university increased as positive reinterpretation, a coping style, increased. In an experimental study (Baqtayan & Mai, 2012) conducted with freshmen in Malaysia, students in the experimental group were only taught how to cope with academic stress. Results showed that students in the experimental group better coped with academic stress than did those in the control group.

University students need a wider variety of social support sources to cope with the stress causing agents that they face during their first year of university. Relevant research

emphasizes that social support is among the important factors contributing to university students exhibiting positive behaviors toward university adjustment (Anschuetz, 2005; Chao, 2012; Crockett et al., 2007; Salami, 2011). In the literature, sources of social support fall mostly into three categories: family, friends, and significant other (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). It is stated that these people (mother, father, spouse, lover, friends, family, teachers, relatives, neighbors, and experts) are the sources that an individual turns to when s/he experiences problems or stress (Zimet et al., 1988). Again, it is stated in the literature that the social support provided in these sources are classified as emotional, instrumental, informational, and overall support (S. Cohen & Wills, 1985). Murray, Lombardi, Bender, and Gerdes (2013) showed in their study on stress, social support, and the adjustment process experienced by students with disabilities during their transition into university in the United States that social support positively contributed to university adjustment. In addition, Yusoff and Othman (2011) showed that psychological adjustment was highly correlated with perceived social support from family, friends, and a significant other for international students.

Individuals' abilities to adjust to a new environment is closely related to the type of self-construal that they have. The concept of self-construal is considered to be a dynamic structure helping one to organize and manage his behaviors in cognitive and affective processes (Singelis, 1994). Research (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003; Locke & Christensen, 2007; Mattingly, Oswald, & Clark, 2011) indicates that individuals with high relational self-construal are successful in inter-personal relationships due to their characteristics, such as their abilities to build harmonious social connections with friends, to open themselves to others and behave empathically in social relationships, and to healthily resolve inter-personal conflicts. In addition to these findings, it was observed that individuals' relational self-construal is related to self-opening up in building close friendships and romantic connections, mutual love, feelings of closeness, and relationship satisfaction (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000). It has been considered important to investigate the role of relational self-construal in the university adjustment process since it also includes the process that individuals go through while building new relationships.

Recent studies have emphasized the role of resilience and its positive contribution to adjustment in the face of difficult conditions (Fassig, 2003; Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007; Theron & Theron, 2013; Werner, 2012; Yates & Grey, 2012). Resilience is considered one's capacity to recover in the face of stressful situations (Davidson et al., 2005). Based on this definition, individuals must first face a risky situation. Risks, considered an increase in the possibility of unfavorable consequences (Masten, 1994) or stress causing agents (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), are defined as the beginning of a serious situation or factors increasing the possibility of the stress experienced. Considering that university life includes many risk factors, it may be said

that individuals' resilience characters play an important role in university adjustment. Although the concept of resilience is placed among factors that are positively related to adjustment in today's studies, it is mostly discussed in reference to such protective factors as positive relationships with families, optimism, focus of control, and self-efficacy (Buehler & Gerard, 2013; Fassig, 2003; Selby, 2000). Similarly, it is observed that although initial studies (Eminağaoğlu, 2006; Gizir, 2004; Orbay, 2009; Özcan, 2005; Terzi, 2008; Yalın, 2007) on resilience in Turkey were conducted based on the protective factors of resilience, they were limited in number.

In general, it is important to reveal the variables that provide people with easy recovery after undergoing stressful life conditions and traumas. Considered in this context, university life includes many sources of stress. Both coping styles and the categories of social support, among the concepts reviewed within the current study, are considered among the sources of support referred to in the case of stress. Said differently, although the concept of resilience in these contexts is discussed within the corpus of research on adjustment, it may be said that the number of studies examining the role of at-risk groups' resilience characteristics in a sample composed of Turkish university students is quite limited. In addition, the existence of studies indicating the contribution of individuals' relational self-construal to social adjustment suggested the importance of considering this concept in the current study. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the role of coping styles and sources of social support, resilience and relational self-construal in the adjustment of freshman students with certain risk characteristics.

Method

Participants

Participants of this study are freshman students attending their education in different faculties of one state University at the Northern part of Turkey constitute the participants in the current research. Participants were selected after a two-stage process via criterion sampling, a purposive sampling method (Patton, 1990). According to Patton (1990), criterion sampling means including materials or persons in the study based on previously defined criteria. During the first stage, 790 students studying in various faculties and universities were contacted. In the next stage, considering Masten and Reed's (2002) view that resilience studies should be conducted when a risk or adversity actually occurs, students having at least one of the risk characteristics were defined. Finally, 527 students aged between 17 and 25 ($M = 19.53$, $S = 1.32$) including 373 females (70.78%), 152 males (28.84%), and 2 students stating no gender were selected as participants.

Data Collection Tool

Personal information form. This form included questions on gender, age, monthly income, number of siblings, birth order of children, and current housing.

Risk factors defining list. Risks are the factors leading to familial, environmental, or genetic misfortunes and unfavorable consequences for an individual (Masten & Tellegen, 2012). The researchers defined fifteen (15) risk factors in the current study based on resilience studies in the literature (Gizir, 2006; Jenson & Fraser, 2010; Murray, 2003; Sameroff, 1998).

Table 1
Risk Factors Defining List

Individual	Familial	Environmental
· Being exposed to violence	· Mother and/or father having a physical or psychological disorder	· Having a mother/father/sibling needing special education
· Being exposed to sexual abuse	· Having a chronic illness himself/herself or one present in the family	· Having to work for money during education
· Using alcohol, drugs, substances, etc.	· Divorced parents	· Being exposed to natural disasters
· Being raised as an adopted child in a family	· Living with one's step mother/father	· Experiencing immigration (due to war, terror, or any external reason)
· Being without experience of living away from one's family	· Mother and/or father using alcohol, drugs, substance, etc.	

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). The MSPSS scale developed by Zimet et al. (1988) and measures the adequacy of social support perceived from three different sources; these being, family, friends, and a significant other. The MSPSS was adapted into Turkish by Eker and Arkar (1995). The scale is designed as a 7-point Likert type from 1, meaning *definitely no*, to 7, meaning *definitely yes*. Scores within the sub-scales are calculated by adding the scores of the four items on each sub-scale. The total score of the scale is calculated by adding all of the sub-scale's scores. Higher scores indicate higher perceived social support. The scale was reviewed by Eker, Arkar, and Yaldız (2001). The reliability study showed that the scale had a three-factor structure and that the internal consistency Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for all the entire scale was .89, .85 for the family support dimension, .88 for the friend support dimension, and .92 for the significant other support dimension. In the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were found as follows: .81, .88, and .93 respectively. The overall score for the scale was found to be .85.

Relational-Interdependent Self-Construct Scale: Developed by Cross et al. (2000), this scale was adapted into Turkish by Akin, Eroğlu, Kayış, and Satici (2010). A self-report measurement tool, the Relational-Interdependent Self-Construct Scale consists of 11 items and a single factor. It was designed as a 7-point Likert type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). The adapted form of the scale had an internal consistency coefficient of .85. It was found in the study conducted to ascertain adaptation validity, that the scale had a

negative relationship ($r = -.52$) with the UCLA Loneliness Scale. Higher scores on the scale indicate a higher relational-interdependent self-construal level. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .73 in the current study.

Coping Styles Scale Brief Form (CSS-BF): The CSS-BF is a 14-factor scale prepared by [Bacanlı, Sürücü, and İlhan \(2013\)](#) based on the brief form of Coping Styles Scale developed by [Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub \(1989\)](#) and reviewed by [Carver \(1997\)](#). Scores on the CSS-BF range from 1 (*I never do that*) to 4 (*I mostly do so*). Lower scores on the scale indicate that the relevant dimension is used less whereas higher scores mean that the relevant dimension is used more. [Bacanlı et al. \(2013\)](#) found that the internal consistency coefficients of the dimensions fell between .39 and .92 based on the findings regarding the validity and reliability of the CSS-BF. In addition, the correlation values related to the test and retest of the measurement tool with a two-week interval varied between .44 and .90. The variance explained by all the factors in the scale is 80.37%. In the current study, the CSS-BF's internal consistency coefficients range from .07 to .87. Since it is considered unacceptable to use a dimension whose internal consistency coefficient value is less than .50, the dimensions of acceptance, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, and using emotional social support were not included in the analyses.

University Life Scale (ULS): Developed by [Aladağ et al. \(2003\)](#) in order to ascertain how well students adjust to university, the ULS scale consists of a 7-point Likert type measurement tool with items ranging from 1 (*does not fit me*) and 7 (*fits me well*). Higher scores indicate increasingly successful levels of adjustment whereas lower scores indicate the opposite. The scale consists of six sub-dimensions in total. These sub-dimensions are as follows: (1) adjustment to the university environment, (2) emotional adjustment, (3) personal adjustment, (4) relations with the opposite sex, (5) academic adjustment, and (6) social adjustment. While correlations among the measurement sub-scales vary between .33 and .48, the correlation between sub-dimensions and total score varies between .64 and .77. The sub-scales' Cronbach's Alpha coefficients vary between .63 and .91. In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha values for the scale sub-dimensions were found to be between .54 and .87.

Resiliency Scale: Developed by [Gürgen \(2006\)](#) in order to define university students' resiliency levels, this 50-item scale is designed as a 5-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 (*never describes*) to 5 (*describes well*). The resiliency scale consists of 8 sub-factors; namely, (1) personal power, (2) being initiative, (3) having a positive outlook, (4) communication prowess, (5) being visionary, (6) one's purpose in life, (7) leadership, and (8) being an investigator. The highest score possible on the resiliency scale is 250 and the lowest is 50. Higher scores indicate higher resilience whereas lower scores suggest lower resilience. This is valid for the sub-dimensions

as well. In the retest reliability study conducted based on the scale's total score, the correlation value between two applications was found to be .89. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be .78 and .87 in test-retest applications. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients on the scale sub-dimensions were found to be between .66 and .89. In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients varied between .38 and .88. Since the internal consistency coefficient for the dimension of "being an investigator" was found to be lower than .50, entailing that it did not meet reliability criteria (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), it was not included in the analyses.

Procedure

According to the DSM-5 (Manual of Mental Disorders - Fifth Edition), a period of three months is required in order for emotional and behavioral signs to become manifest in reaction to stressful situations during the adjustment process (Amerikan Psikiyatri Birliđi/American Psychiatry Association, 2013). This period, therefore, is considered better able to measure students' reactions toward adjustments. First of all, the university president's office was contacted to obtain permission to collect data. Measurement materials were administered to the students in groups in a classroom environment by the first author. Each administration lasted approximately 40-45 minutes. In order to increase participants' motivation, they were told that the results would be shared with them. Through a code shared during the test's administration, those who wanted to know their results were sent their scores and evaluations.

Data Analysis

SPSS 20.0 was used to analyze the data. Prior to statistical analysis, the amount of data meeting the assumptions made on the analyses was reviewed in which values in the data set were first controlled for erroneous coding. In case of missing values, a lost value assignment was conducted. After this, multi-collinearity among variables, variance inflation (VIF), and tolerance values were studied in which tolerances near zero, VIFs larger than 5, condition indices both larger than 30 and accompanied by two variances larger than .50 were not encountered. While analyzing the research data, the relationship between students' university adjustment scores and relational self-construct, social support, coping styles, and resilience characteristics were tested using correlation analyses. Further, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to define variables' predicting abilities with significant relationships to university adjustment scores.

Findings

Zero-Order Correlations

In the current study, correlations between independent and dependent variables were examined. Later, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to examine predicting abilities of the independent variables on university adjustment. The results of the correlation analysis are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Correlations between Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables		TA	ACE	EA	PA	ROS	AA	SA
Self-Construal	Relational Self-Construal	.16**	.11*	.03	.26**	.10*	.06	.18**
Perceived Social Support	Family	.30**	.18**	.20**	.26**	.09*	.14**	.42**
	Friends	.29**	.27**	.12**	.27**	.16**	.09*	.34**
	Significant Other	.20**	.16**	.05	.15**	.25**	.10*	.16**
Coping Styles	Planning (PL)	.35**	.25**	.21**	.40**	.19**	.21**	.23**
	Using Instrumental Social Support (ISS)	.15**	.07	.09*	.19**	.10*	.07	.16**
	Humor (HUM)	.07	.03	.05	.01	.14**	.04	.04
	Turning to Religion (REL)	.08	.11**	-.02	.19**	-.06	.01	.10*
	Positive Reinterpretation (PRI)	.37**	.31**	.29**	.36**	.17**	.19**	.21**
	Focusing on/Venting of Emotions (FVE)	-.10*	-.04	-.16**	-.00	-.04	-.12**	-.05
	Denial (DEN)	-.06	-.06	-.04	-.02	.03	-.10*	-.01
	Behavioral Disengagement (BD)	-.40**	-.21**	-.36**	-.38**	-.27**	-.23**	-.27**
	Mental Disengagement (MD)	.08	.05	.04	.12**	.02	.07	.07
	Substance Use (SUB)	-.14**	-.11**	-.10*	-.12**	.04	-.06	-.18**
	Resilience	Personal Power	.58**	.36**	.43**	.65**	.38**	.28**
Initiative		.69**	.43**	.57**	.54**	.47**	.42**	.47**
Positive Outlook		.65**	.41**	.51**	.48**	.44**	.38**	.49**
Communication/Building Relationships		.56**	.33**	.41**	.40**	.51**	.31**	.47**
Being Visionary		.41**	.28**	.32**	.32**	.30**	.25**	.26**
One's purpose in Life		.49**	.36**	.33**	.50**	.29**	.26**	.33**
Leadership		.59**	.34**	.49**	.42**	.50**	.34**	.39**

Note. TA: Total Adjustment Score, ACE: Adjustment to University Environment, EA: Emotional Adjustment, PA: Personal Adjustment, ROS: Relations with the Opposite Sex, AA: Academic Adjustment, SA: Social Adjustment, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

As can be seen in Table 2, overall university adjustment (TA) had correlations with all independent variables except for some sub-dimensions of coping styles (HUM, REL, DEN, MD). This variable had the strongest relationship with the sub-dimensions of resilience (between $r = .41$ and $.69$). Again this variable had the weakest relationship with self-construal (.16), social support (between .20 and .30), and some dimensions of coping styles (between $-.40$ and $.37$). Adjustment to university environment (ACE), a sub-dimension of university adjustment, was found to be related with all independent

variables except for a number of coping style dimensions (ISS, HUM, FVE, DEN, MD). The strongest relationship with adjustment to university environment was with resilience characteristics (.28 and .43), coping styles (.11 and .31), and social support sources (.16 and .27) and the weakest relationship was with self-construct (.11). When other independent variables of emotional adjustment (EA) were considered, significant relationships were found throughout the scale, with the exception of relational self-construct, social support, and a number of coping style sub-dimensions (HUM, REL, DEN, EMI). Since resilience characteristics had the strongest relationship with emotional adjustment (.32 and .57), both coping styles (-.36 and .09) and sources of social support (.12 and .20) were among those variables sharing a relationship with emotional adjustment. It was observed that personal adjustment (PA) also had significant relationships with all independent variables except a number of coping style dimensions (HUM, FVE, DEN). Based on these relationships, variables having the strongest relationships with personal adjustment were found to be resilience characteristics (.32 and .65) and coping styles (.12 and .40). On the other hand however, social support (.15 and .27) and relational self-construct (.26) were found to have a weak relationship with personal adjustment. The sub-dimension of relationships with the opposite sex (ROS) was found to have a relationship with all other variables except for a number of coping styles dimensions (REL, FVE, DEN, MD, SUB). While resilience characteristics (.29 and .51) had a strong relationship, coping styles (.10 and -.27), social support (.09 and .25), and relational self-construct (.10) had weak relationships. They were found not only to have a relationship with the sub-dimension of academic adjustment and relational self-construct, but also with all other variables except for a few falling under coping styles (ISS, HUM, REL, EMI, SUB). Resilience characteristics among these variables were observed to have the strongest relationship with academic adjustment (.25 and .42). Social support (.09 and .14) and coping styles (-.10 and -.23) were among the other variables observed to have weak relationship. Finally, social support and coping styles from among the sub-dimensions of university adjustment were observed to have a significant relationship with all variables except for some sub-dimensions (HUM, FVE, DEN, MD). The strongest relationship from among these variables was with resilience characteristics (.26 and .48) and social support (.16 and .42). Other than these, coping styles (.16 and -.27) and relational self-construct (.18) were observed to have a weak relationship with social adjustment.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to determine how well other variables predict one's level of "adjustment to university life" and its sub-dimensions (Table 3 and Table 4). First of all, in the hierarchical multiple regression analysis conducted on the total score of "adjustment in university," the Alpha rate was set as .013 (.05/4) at each step in order to test for type 1 errors

(Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The hierarchic multiple regression analysis was conducted in four steps, excluding both academic and emotional adjustment. In the regression equation, relational interdependent self-construal was entered first, followed by one’s perceived social support. Coping styles were entered thirdly, followed by resilience scores. Findings are presented in Table 3.

A review of Table 3 shows that relational self-construal, added in the first step, significantly predicts university adjustment ($F(1, 525) = 14.08, p < .001$). It was seen that all sub-dimensions of perceived social support, added in the analysis on the second step, made a significant contribution to university adjustment. During the third step, coping styles having scored significant relationships on the correlation test were added, and it was observed that these variables not only explained 19% of the total variance ($R^2 = .19$), but also significantly predicted university adjustment ($F(6.520) = 12.97, p < .001$). However, although positive re-interpretation among these variables made a positive contribution according to the model, behavioral disengagement and focusing on/Venting of Emotions made a negative one. The findings revealed that the

Variable	B	β	ΔR^2
<i>Step 1</i>			
Constant	194.45		.03
Relational Self-Construal	.63	.17*	
<i>Step 2</i>			
Constant	161.54		.10
SS (Family)	1.28	.19*	
SS (Friends)	.99	.15*	
SS (Significant Others)	.44	.11*	
<i>Step 3</i>			
Constant	178.66		.19
Planning	.41	.02	
Using Instrumental Social Support	-.96	-.04	
Positive Reinterpretation	5.55	.23*	
Focusing on/Venting of Emotions	-1.80	-.10*	
Behavioral Disengagement	-6.42	-.29*	
Substance Use	-.66	-.03	
<i>Step 4</i>			
Constant	75.40		.28
Personal power	-.10	-.03	
Initiative	1.66	.32*	
Positive Outlook	1.84	.22*	
Communication	1.40	.14*	
Being Visionary	.73	.05	
One’s purpose in life	.04	.00	
Leadership	1.60	.18*	
		R^2	.61

Note. * $p < .05$.

Resiliency Scale's sub-dimensions' contribution to total variance was 28% ($R^2 = .28$) after completing the final step. The contribution of all independent variables in the model was 61% ($R^2 = .61$).

Table 4
Findings of Hierarchical multiple regression analysis regarding Sub-Dimensions of University Adjustment

Variables β	Adjustment to University Environment		Emotional Adjustment		Personal Adjustment		Relations with Opposite Sex		Academic Adjustment		Social Adjustment	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
<i>Step 1</i>												
Constant		.01		-		.07		.01		-		.03
RSC	.11*		-		.25*		.10*		-			.18*
<i>Step 2</i>												
Constant		.07		.04		.06		.06		.03		.17
SS (Family)	.05		.19*		.16*		-.01		.12*			.32*
SS (Friends)	.22*		.03		.12*		.09		.01			.14*
SS (Sig. Others)	.09*		-		.06		.22*		.08			.05
<i>Step 3</i>												
Constant		.08		.14		.18		.08		.08		.06
Planning	.02		-.12*		.12*		.02		.04			-.02
Instrumental Social Support			-.01		-.02		.00		-			-.01
Humor	.02		-		.09*		-		-			-.05
Turning to Religion			-		-		.11*		-			.10
Positive Reinterpretation	.22*		.23*		.17*		.06		-.12			-
Venting of Emotions			-.14*		-		-		-.09*			-
Denial			-		-		-		-.09*			-
Behavioral Disengagement	-.11*		-.31*		-.25*		-.22*		-.14*			-.20
Mental Disengagement			-		.06		-		-			-
Substance Use	-.03		-.03		.03		-		-			-.08
<i>Step 4</i>												
Constant		.11		.21		.17		.23		.14		.15
Personal power	-.14		-.14		.54*		-.07*		-.23*			-.08
Initiative	.24*		.24*		.12		.16*		.26*			.20*
Positive Outlook	.12*		.12*		.02		.18*		.19*			.17*
Communication	.05		.05		.04		.25*		.07			.23*
Visionary	.08		.08		-.13*		.01		.07			.02
Purpose in Life	.12*		.12		.01		-.05		.03			-.04
Leadership	.09		.09		.00		.21*		.15*			.08
Total $R^2 =$.28		.39		.48		.39		.25		.41

* $p < .05$.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to examine how well each sub-dimension obtained on the University Life Scale (ACE, EA, PA, ROS, AA, and SA) predicted the relevant variables listed in Table 2. The findings are presented in Table 4. A review of Table 4 shows that all independent variables significantly predicted “adjustment to university environment” scores. In the analysis, the greatest contribution to the dependent variable variance was made by resilience ($R^2 = .11$), followed by coping styles ($R^2 = .8$), perceived social support ($R^2 = .7$), and self-construal ($R^2 = .01$), respectively.

The analysis regarding emotional adjustment, a sub-dimension of university adjustment, was conducted in three steps. Among the independent variables entered into the model, resilience characteristics ($R^2 = .21$) made the greatest contribution followed by coping styles ($R^2 = .14$) and social support sources ($R^2 = .04$). The total contribution of all independent variables in the model was 39% ($R^2 = .39$).

The analysis on how well personal adjustment was predicted was conducted using a four-step process. It was seen that each independent variable entered into the model significantly predicted personal adjustment. Among these independent variables, coping styles ($R^2 = .18$) and resilience characteristics ($R^2 = .17$), respectively, made the greatest contribution in the model. In addition to these, relational interdependent self-construal ($R^2 = .07$) and social support sources ($R^2 = .06$) were also observed to make significant contributions in the model. The total contribution of all independent variables in the model was 48% ($R^2 = .48$).

In the analysis conducted on how well adjustment to the opposite sex was predicted, resilience characteristics ($R^2 = .23$) was found to make the greatest contribution of all independent variables. Following in predictive power were coping styles ($R^2 = .08$) and social support sources ($R^2 = .06$), which were observed to significantly explain relations with the opposite sex. Finally, it was seen that relational interdependent self-construal ($R^2 = .01$) was the variable least able to predict students’ adjustment to relations with the opposite sex. All independent variables included in the equation explained 39% ($R^2 = .39$) of the total variance.

A regression analysis regarding how well the sub-dimension of academic adjustment was predicted was conducted in three steps. All independent variables included in the model were found to significantly contribute to the prediction of academic adjustment. Among these variables, resilience characteristics ($R^2 = .14$), coping styles ($R^2 = .08$), and social support sources ($R^2 = .03$), respectively, made the greatest contribution to academic adjustment. It was observed that all the variables included in the model explained 25% ($R^2 = .25$) of the total variance.

Finally, in the regression analysis conducted on the prediction power of social adjustment, it was found that social support ($R^2 = .17$) and resilience ($R^2 = .15$) made

the greatest contributions in the model. In addition to these, coping styles ($R^2 = .06$) and relational interdependent self-construal were found to significantly predict social adjustment. All variables included in the regression analysis explained 42% ($R^2 = .42$) of the total variance regarding social adjustment.

Discussion

In the current study, the researchers used coping styles, social support, relational self-construal, and resilience variables to examine how well at-risk freshmen students' university adjustment scores, including its sub-dimensions, were able to be predicted. A review of the research findings shows that resilience characteristics made the greatest contribution to predicting at-risk students' overall adjustment in university. In the relevant literature, a positive influence of resilience on individuals under challenging conditions is mentioned (Masten, 2011; Ng, Ang, & Ho, 2012; Werner, 2012). Therefore, it can be said that resilience characteristics makes a positive contribution to overcoming adjustment issues occurring during one's transition into university life. This conclusion is consistent with previous studies on resilience and adjustment in the literature (Orbay, 2009; Park & Lee, 2011). In Fassig's (2003) study, it is emphasized that high levels resilience characteristics (optimism, self-respect, and focus of control) made individuals' adjustment processes easier. Similarly, Pritchard, Wilson, and Yamnitz (2007) stated that optimism in freshmen was one of the factors that facilitated the adjustment process to university life. In this regard, it may be said that those students who are optimistic and who have good communication initiation skills are able to adjust more easily to university life. On the other hand, contrary to the researchers' expectations, the dimension of personal power from among resilience characteristics was found to be a negative predictor of all adjustment dimensions except for personal adjustment. A review of the correlations among variables (Table 2) showed that personal power is positively related with all adjustment dimensions.

In the regression analyses, another variable found to contribute to overall university adjustment was coping styles. Among these styles, while positive re-interpretation was found to positively predict overall university adjustment, the dimensions of focusing on feelings and behavioral disengagement were found to negatively predict university adjustment. Based on these findings, it can be said that developing a positive reframing mechanism toward stressful situations in a new environment increases one's ability to adjust and using avoidance strategies such as focusing on feelings and behavioral disengagement negatively effects one's ability to adjust. Similar to these findings, it is observed in the relevant literature that positive re-interpretation is positively related to university adjustment (Brisette et al., 2002; Tuna, 2003) and that behavioral disengagement and focusing on feelings are negatively related to adjustment (Brisette et al., 2002; Leong, Bonz, & Zachar, 1997; Tuna, 2003; Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

When studies regarding social support sources are considered, it is observed that social support significant predictor of university adjustment (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007; Lidy & Kahn, 2006; Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000). The significance of social support for at-risk individuals is also strongly emphasized in the literature (Mairean & Turliuc, 2011; Murray et al., 2013; Özcan, 2005). Considering the research conducted with freshmen, it can therefore be said that the findings of the current study are largely consistent with those of other relevant studies in the literature (Duru, 2008; Salami, 2011; Sasaki & Yamasaki, 2007; Tao et al., 2000). In the research, it is stated that young adults prefer their closest female/male friend, mother/father, and professional advisors, respectively, when seeking help (Hinson & Swanson, 1993). Considering that a social environment consisting of family members and friends is more important than individualism in Turkey (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012), it can be said that the family and friend support highlighted in the current study findings may also be related to cultural elements. The other reason for the lower of perceived social support of the significant other is individuals feeling of being understood when the support is from the informal sources (Arslantaş, Dereboy, Aştı, & Pektekin, 2011).

The weakest contribution to predicting overall adjustment to university life was made by the relational self-construal variable. Based on a review of studies on this variable, it was found that research on adjustment may be considered inadequate. However, studies, revealing that it is positively related to individuals' relational well-being over close relationship processes (Cross et al., 2003), on the one hand, and negatively related to their loneliness (Akin et al., 2010), on the other, are available. In addition, relational self-construal is emphasized to be positively related with friend to friend behavior (Mattingly et al., 2011). Similarly, it be concluded that since building close relationships, such as friendships and amity, are commonly shared characteristics of these people, (Segrin & Taylor, 2007) these characteristics make a positive contribution to the adjustment process. This conclusion shows that relational self-construal, though low in level, is among the variables that predict university adjustment.

In the stepwise regression analyses conducted on the predictive power of university adjustment sub-dimensions, a large consistency with the results of the analysis on overall adjustment was observed. However, adjustment sub-dimensions exhibiting different characteristics naturally led to a difference in some results. When the analyses conducted for the university adjustment sub-dimensions are reviewed, the order of predicting variables was observed to be similar to that of the analysis conducted for overall adjustment, particularly for adjustment in university environment, emotional adjustment, and academic adjustment. In other words, as in the scores of overall adjustment, resilience was the most effective at predicting adjustment from among the sub-dimensions except for personal adjustment and social adjustment. While coping

dimensions (planning, turning to religion, positive re-interpretation, and behavioral disengagement) were best predicted personal adjustment, resilience characteristics ranked second. Social support provided the greatest contribution to predicting social adjustment, followed by resilience characteristics. As can be seen, resilience characteristics lead in their ability to predict the sub-dimensions. A more noticeable contribution by resilience characteristics to adjustment dimensions from among these dimensions may be due to other characteristics of resilient individuals. Based on these characteristics, resilient individuals not only have a good command of communication, adjustment, problem solving, and affective organization skills, but are also autonomous, goal oriented, and optimistic (Kumpfer & Bluth, 2004; Masten, 1994; Werner, 1995).

Unlike the results regarding the other four dimensions of adjustment, coping styles were the most effective predictors of personal adjustment from among all sub-dimensions of adjustment to university life, and social support sources were the most effective predictors of social adjustment. However, when R² values are reviewed (Table 4), even though personal adjustment was better predicted by coping styles, upon a review of the Beta coefficients, it was observed that personal power alone among resilience characteristics was the variable making the greatest contribution. Therefore, attention to this detail may be useful when interpreting results. Perceived social support predicted the social adjustment and the family dimension was more predictive among other variables. This could be attributed to the time of data collection. Since the measurement period coincided with students' 3rd and 4th month of university, the social support that students received from their families may have been stronger. Students entering a new environment initially contact their families more and miss them more when facing such issues as adjusting to a new city and to university life (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Therefore, students may want to visit their families more often. However, longitudinal studies conducted on social support indicate that individuals' support sources change over time (Tao et al., 2000). An individual, sensing more support from his/her family and the teaching staff at the beginning of his/her university education, perceives increasingly more social support from his/her friends and family as s/he adjusts (at the end of first semester). Continuous material support from family and increased communication with friends during the university adjustment process are put forward as initiators of this change over time (Tao et al., 2000).

Differentiation regarding the sub-dimensions of adjustment to university life is valid for coping styles as well. While positive re-interpretation among coping styles was a positive predictor, behavioral disengagement was found to make a negative contribution to predicting adjustment. Particularly in personal adjustment, both the dimensions of planning and turning to religion contributed significantly. Although turning to religion is a significant predictor of personal adjustment, this might not be the case when it comes to coping with low-level stressors, such as adjustment to university life or to

a new environment. However, the reverse could be the case when coping with major life-threatening stressors such as natural disasters, death/loss, and sickness. A study on cancer patients mentions turning to religion as being among the most commonly used coping styles (Carver et al., 1993). Humor, as a coping style, is similar. This coping style, significant in terms of relations with the opposite sex in the current research, has been considered a positive predictor of adjustment in some studies (Ward & Kennedy, 2001) and a negative predictor in some others (Tuna, 2003). Such differentiation may depend on where and when humor is used because, in the literature, using humor is included among the behaviors useful in sustaining relationships (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Cihan Güngör & İlhan, 2008). In this context, it can be said that humor's ability to significantly predict relationships with the opposite sex may be a result of it being used positively in the relationship building process.

An unexpected finding of the research is that the coping style of planning negatively predicted emotional adjustment. In the current research, even though a low-level, albeit significant ($r = .21$), relationship between planning and emotional adjustment was revealed in the correlation analysis conducted to examine relationships among variables, the Beta coefficient of planning was found to be negative in the stepwise regression analysis. Based on this finding, neither a direct conclusion nor an inference that this dimension negatively predicts emotional adjustment can be made. A review of literature indicates that a variable that has a positive relationship in the correlation equation and negative effect due to other variables is mostly explained by the *suppressor variable effect* revealed by a multi-regression analysis (J. Cohen, 1968; Friedman & Wall, 2005; Maassen & Bakker, 2001). Considering the current research findings, behavioral disengagement, regarded useful in the short term for students, may have suppressed the dimension of planning in the long term. Moreover, planning could have been suppressed due to its having a low correlation coefficient. In this context, researchers tested the dimension of planning in a regression analysis individually for each dimension of adjustment, the results of which showed that individually planning significantly and positively predicted each dimension of adjustment. However, the Beta coefficient of planning, positively related with adjustment in the stepwise regression analysis, became a negative predictor of emotional adjustment and social adjustment due to influence of positive re-interpretation and behavioral disengagement. In the dimensions of overall university adjustment, adjustment to university environment, relations with the opposite sex, and academic adjustment, the predictive role of planning was found to be insignificant due again to its being suppressed by these variables.

In sum, considering all the independent variables within the current research, it can be said that total predicted adjustment in general and resilience characteristics, positive coping styles, and social support sources in specific played significant roles in the adjustment process. Moreover, relational self-construal has a lower explanatory role

compared to other variables. Considering that university adjustment has multi dimensions, it is natural that these variables have sub-dimensions falling under different umbrella dimensions. Thus, it is important to develop positive structures for students stepping in university life so as to ease their adjustment process. Guidance and counseling centers in universities have important duties in this area. Counseling centers may identify issues or problems commonly experienced by students via student information systems. That way, efforts may be directed toward providing positive coping styles to students connected with guidance and counseling centers, developing their resilience characteristics, and providing social support sources to increase adjustment. Thus, solutions for students' personal, social, emotional, and academic issues are facilitated.

As far as is known, relational self-construal in the university adjustment process in Turkey has been examined for the first time in the current research. The obtained findings indicate that relational self-construal contributed to university adjustment, though its contribution was low. Therefore, considering relational self-construal along with other self-construal (such as autonomous self, relational autonomous self) in future studies may help researchers to better understand the role of self-construal in the adjustment process.

The current study has some methodological limitations that need to be considered. All participants in the current research were at-risk freshmen and therefore do not represent all university population. Thus, in future studies, larger samples including university students without risk characteristics should be considered for comparison purposes. A final suggestion for researchers is to test whether the dimension of planning is a negative predictor in a regression model when grouped together with behavioral disengagement. In future studies, it can be researched as to whether a suppressor variable effect exists on the dimension of planning from among coping styles and on the dimension of personal power from among resilience characteristics.

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