ENHANCING FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ADAPTATION THROUGH PERSON-CENTRED THINKING

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Abstract: This study uses person-centred thinking as a theoretical framework to explore first-year undergraduate students' adaptation preferences. The aim is to enhance understanding of support mechanisms by analyzing students' subjective experiences. A qualitative visual methodology employing "one-page profiles" was used to identify preferences for improving adaptation. The research involved 18 students from humanities programs at two Slovak universities. Semiotic analysis of visual representations and thematic analysis of text revealed key preference areas: values, personality traits, social aspects, and motivation. Findings highlight a preference for a holistic approach combining personal development, social support, and academic growth, emphasizing authentic communication and empathetic understanding.

Keywords: academic adaptation, person-centred thinking, students, preferences.

1 Introduction

Support for first-year students and reducing the dropout rate are topics being addressed in the Slovak Republic in the context of ongoing accreditations and internal quality systems at higher education institutions (2022-2024). These areas are primarily included in Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and its amendments and related documents administered by the Accreditation Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic. The criteria for the accreditation of higher education study programs are implemented through internal guidelines of individual universities. Each higher education institution and university has set its internal guidelines within the internal quality assurance systems, which regulate measures to support students. And follow the policies of the Standards for Study Programmes of the Accreditation Agency (Šoltésová, Nemcová, 2023). In the context of this guideline, higher education institutions in Slovakia have started implementing specific measures. Examples include adaptation measures that provide various forms of support for first-year students (individual counselling, adaptation programs, support for creating social ties, mental health support, etc.) and dropout rate monitoring, which includes systems for monitoring study results and measures to prevent early graduation. Indicators such as attendance, study results, or student feedback are regularly monitored to identify those who may be at risk of early graduation (Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, 2020).

In this context, increased research attention is focused on adapting first-year students to higher education. The significant increase in the number of students entering higher education has brought greater diversity to the student population regarding their readiness, social background, and individual needs (Gabriel, 2022; Lim, 2020; Seberini, 2020). At the same time, demands on the quality of higher education and student success have increased, with the first year of study proving to be a critical period for student retention and overall academic success (De Clercq et al., 2020) or for problematic internet use and procrastination (Doktorova et al., 2023).

1.1 The theoretical framework

The transition from secondary to tertiary education presents several challenges for first-year undergraduate students. Research shows that unsuccessful adaptation in the first year often leads to early dropping out of studies, which has consequences for individuals, institutions, and society (Nurmalitasari et al., 2023; Lim, 2020). Body image evaluation reflects the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's own body and adaptation to a new environment (Doktorová, et al., 2024). Therefore, identifying students' specific needs during this transition period is crucial for setting up effective support strategies and measures for higher education institutions. Improving the adjustment of first-year undergraduate students through person-centred thinking involves considering various factors that influence their adjustment to university life and academic activities e.g., problematic internet use as described by Doktorova et al., (2023). Person-centred approaches can facilitate this transition by encouraging direct engagement with students in an educational context and promoting creative thinking and reflection through interactive workshops (Reeve et al., 2021). The adaptation of first-year university students is a complex process influenced by multiple factors. A study by Shengyao et al. (2024) highlights the importance of personality traits such as emotional maturity, positive self-attitude, social activity, and intelligence for successful adjustment. Academic expectations, along with personal, social, and institutional dimensions, are key factors in student adaptation and success (Kahu & Nelson, 2017; Corti et al. 2023). A person-centred approach and a psychologically secure educational environment, supported by study mentors and faculty members, are essential for successful student adaptation (Chaudhry et al. 2024). Rogers (in McHenry et al. 2020) argues that every individual possesses a natural potential for positive growth, which can best be realized in an environment characterized by three core conditions: congruence (authenticity), unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding.

Undergraduate students face challenges that require creating a supportive environment that respects their needs and pace of adaptation, directly related to Rogers' conditions for facilitating personal development (Tudor & Rodgers, 2020). The person-centred approach, which emphasizes subjective experience and a phenomenological approach, allows to capture of each student's unique preferences and needs during the adaptation process. Thus, this approach provides a suitable theoretical basis for investigating how students perceive and define their needs in the process of academic adaptation and how this process can best be supported from their perspective. This study examines first-year undergraduate students' adaptation preferences through a person-centered thinking approach. The investigation aims to broaden understanding of support mechanisms by analysing students' subjective experiences and preferences. This study was guided by the research question: *What are the individual preferences of first-year students to improve their academic adaptation?*

2 Methods and Materials

A qualitative exploratory research design was implemented in this study. Specifically, the concept of Visual Research Methods, which approaches qualitative research, uses visual techniques to collect data and interact with young research participants. This approach is beneficial when working with students because it allows them to express themselves in ways that may be more natural and accessible than traditional verbal methods (Barriage et al., 2017). This approach can provide insights into social realities, visual culture, and environments in ways that text alone cannot (Ong, 2020). As visual research methods evolve, they offer new opportunities for data collection, analysis, and presentation, challenging researchers

to expand their methodological tools and theoretical perspectives (Metcalfe & Blanco, 2019).

Data Collection
Data was collected using the 'One-Page Profile' (OPP) method. Students compiled profiles according to specific instructions as assignments during seminars at two universities in the Slovak Republic. Students created an OPP according to particular instructions (format: Word or PDF file, minimum 500 characters per section, maximum length: 2 A4 pages, content structure: 1. What is important to me? 2. What do people value about me? 3. How can others support me?).

Integrating the OPP method with Visual Research Methods presents new potential, as it provides a richer and more comprehensive view of students in the research context. OPPs are increasingly emerging as a valuable educational tool to improve communication and support. In education, OPPs can strengthen the relationship between the study tutor and the student and support student retention at the university (Ridley, 2017). The use of OPPs is consistent with person-centred approaches that focus on the strengths and needs of the individual (Landor, 2018). At the same time, this method corresponds to the principles of the person-centred approach, such as authenticity and congruence. OPP reflects Rogers' emphasis on a phenomenological approach and the subjective experience of the individual by giving voice to the students themselves to express what is important to them (Freire et al., 2020).

Data Analysis
The analysis process involved three complementary approaches: 1. phenomenology analysis (identifying meaningful units, comparing similarities and differences, grouping meaningful units, and establishing coherent categories). Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that explores diverse perceptions of phenomena based on the experiences of individuals (Santos et al., 2018). The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method is used to understand personality. Phenomenology respects human uniqueness and subjective experiences, analyzing phenomena through textual and narrative descriptions (Neubauer et al., 2019). 2. Thematic analysis (all researchers focused on identifying patterns in students' written responses, developing thematic categories describing adaptive preferences, and analyzing value systems and priorities). It involves a systematic process of familiarizing oneself with the data, coding it, and developing themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). 3. Visual semiotic analysis (all researchers examined denotative and connotative meanings in visual elements). Visual semiotic analysis is a method for examining how visual signs present meaning. These approaches often examine denotative and connotative meanings in visual elements (Mengoni, 2021).

Study Setting and Sample
The intentional selection of 18 university students enrolled in the undergraduate humanities programme at universities was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, two authors (JŠ and TŠZ) presented the research with a lecture to the undergraduate students. Following the lecture, the students were invited to participate in the creation of their OPP (baseline data was collected from 35 social work students, 65 psychology students, and 120 pedagogy students). Those who expressed interest in participating in the study were asked to provide consent and contact information. In the second phase of the recruitment process, the authors (JŠ and TŠZ) contacted the 80 students who had initially expressed interest in creating a one-page profile by email. A total of 40 students confirmed their participation in the creation of the one-page profile. Subsequently, the students were allotted five weeks to create their one-page profiles. Upon this timeframe's conclusion, the authors received 36 completed profiles. The process of data sorting then commenced. From the data provided, the authors selected 18 final profiles for analysis, according to the Quality Criteria Model, from the 36 profiles. A deliberate selection of

15-20 participants in phenomenology research ensures sufficient variability (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).
The research establishes the Quality Criteria Model criteria (Yadav, 2021; Rubel & Okech, 2017) encompassing three dimensions: (1) textual content assessment, examining clarity, information depth, and essential area coverage; (2) visual quality evaluation, analysing aesthetics, clarity, and visual element usage; and (3) relevance measurement, determining alignment with research goals and comprehensiveness of question responses.

Table 1 Characteristics of Research Participants

Study Program	Code	Gender	Number of Participants
Pedagogy	(PD)PD1-PD6	Women (W)	3
		Men (M)	3
Social Work (SW)	SW1-SW6	Women (W)	4
		Men (M)	2
Psychology (PS)	PS1-PS6	Women (W)	3
		Men (M)	3
Total		Women (W)	10
		Men (M)	8
Total Participants			18

Source: Own processing

This investigation's sample consists of first-year undergraduate students enrolled full-time in three humanities bachelor's programs: social work (SW), pedagogy (PD), and psychology (PS).

Ethical considerations
The study received approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee (ref. no. UCM-FF-EK 3/2023). All participants provided written informed consent and anonymization to ensure privacy.

Credibility and Transparency
To guarantee the accuracy and reliability of the interpretation, the analysis was conducted by a team of researchers. The analytical rigour provided by researchers JŠ (social work), TŠZ (education sciences) and MT (public health and social sciences) was achieved through independent coding and consensus discussions. The utilisation of a plurality of analytical methodologies, encompassing phenomenography, thematic analysis and visual techniques, served to reinforce the process of methodological triangulation, as described by Ahmed (2024) enhancing both the credibility and transparency of the findings.

3 Results

This study examines first-year undergraduate students' adaptation preferences through a person-centered thinking approach. The investigation aims to broaden understanding of support mechanisms by analysing students' subjective experiences and preferences. The research findings identified students' experiences and preferences that reveal their subjective perception of support mechanisms. The analysis identified four topics in which preferences occurred: I. values and priorities; II. personality characteristics; III. social aspects; and IV. motivational factors.

3.1 Preferences for academic adaptation in the identified topic - Values and Priorities

The findings revealed three thematic categories: core values, personal development, and social connection. Within core values, participants emphasized family support, trust, and health as fundamental elements. The family emerged as a critical support system, illustrated by a social work student who described it as "*...my leaning willow, without them I wouldn't be able to function at all*" (SW1, W), while another participant acknowledged "*I owe everything to them*" (PS1, W). Trust manifested both as relational foundation and self-confidence, evidenced when participants noted "*...trust is the foundation of all relationships...*" (PD5, W) and emphasized "*...trust in my*

ability..." (SW6, W). Health, particularly mental well-being, was identified as crucial for academic success, with one participant stating *"...my mental health and inner well-being are important for my studies..."* (SW1, W).

The analysis revealed key themes within personal development, centered on education and success. Participants emphasized academic achievement's intrinsic value, with one student noting *"I only know it makes sense when I achieve something good here at school!"* (SW5, M). Educational motivation was linked to personal interest and future impact, illustrated by a participant's reflection on *"...the opportunity to study in a field that I enjoy..."* (PS1, W), and another's goal to *"...help others through my future expertise..."* (PS4, M). Life management emerged as a distinct subtheme, encompassing life balance and stability. Students described specific strategies for maintaining equilibrium between academic, professional, and personal commitments, exemplified by one participant's detailed account of balancing *"studying social work... working in a café on the weekends, and spending time with family and friends"* (SW3, W). The importance of stability manifested through preferences for structured environments, with one student emphasizing how *"...rules for the subject, clear expectations in advance give me a sense of stability..."* (PD4, M). Another participant metaphorically described consistency as *"an anchor on a ship,* "highlighting the need for *"a familiar environment, proven people, and established procedures"* (SW2, W).

The theme of social connections centred predominantly on meaningful friendships. Participants distinguished between superficial and authentic relationships, as illustrated by one student's observation that *"Having good friends is important, and not just having friendships is important"* (PS4, M), emphasizing the value of relationship quality over quantity.

The presented results show that students´ value preferences are formed at several levels in the process of academic adaptation. The first level consists of fundamental values, where students clearly emphasize the importance of family as a pillar of stability, friendly relationships as a source of social support, and physical health as an essential prerequisite for functioning. Higher values represent the second, more complex level, where students demonstrate a significant degree of self-reflection and awareness of the importance of education for personal development, the need to maintain a balance between different life roles, the importance of psychological health and well-being, building trust in interpersonal relationships, achieving success in the academic environment, and the need for specific stability as a stabilizing element during the period of adaptation changes. This level structure of values and priorities indicates that students in the process of academic adaptation create a complex value system that integrates both traditional values and more sophisticated aspects of personal and professional growth.

3.2 Students' preference for academic adaptation in the identified area - Personality characteristics

Analysing students' personality characteristics in the process of academic adaptation shows that they possess a diverse set of traits that help them cope with the demands of the university environment. These characteristics can be categorized into five key areas. Proactive characteristics, represented by a positive attitude and perseverance, enable them to face challenges actively. Reflective characteristics, including healthy self-criticism and the ability to be alone, support their self-knowledge and personal growth. Socio-emotional characteristics, manifested in an energetic and humorous nature and empathy, facilitate their social adaptation. Goal-oriented characteristics, expressed in determination and constructive stubbornness, help them achieve academic goals. Communication characteristics, especially the ability to actively listen, support effective interaction in the educational environment. All these characteristics complement each other and create the prerequisites for successful adaptation to university studies.

Table 2 Students' preferences in the area of personal characteristics

Category	Examples of qualitative quotes
Positive attitude	*"My ability to be positive helps me cope with problems at school, in the family, and to help others."* (PD3, W)
Perseverance	*"I will always confirm that I am persistent; I first finish what I started, and only then do I move on."* (PD2, M) *"In addition to creativity, crocheting taught me to be persistent; it is not easy to achieve what I started, but I always persevere and continue, and that will come in handy at school."* (SW1, W)
Self-criticism	*"It also helps me that I try to be critical not only of myself but also of others; I say exactly what the problem is. I realize whether the problem is on my side or others' side."* (PS3, M)
Energetic and humorous nature	*"They like my sense of humour, that I can make fun of myself; it helps me too."* (PS4, M) *"A sense of humour that would be indispensable without it and with which everything goes easier."* (PD1, W).
Empathy	*"I can empathize with people; I don't have to tell them, they feel safe with me, empathy helps me too."* (PD3, W)
Ability to listen	*"I am open to people, and you can talk to me about any topic; I will listen, and they will talk, and I think it is important because I also need to hear from them sometimes."* (SW4, M)
Stubbornness	*"Only in the good sense, I go after what I want, and no one discourages me; I often do things my way, as I feel and want to do them."* (PD3, W)
Purposefulness and ambition	*"...my determination, whatever I do, I look for all possible ways to get to the results."* (PD1, W)
The ability to be alone	*"People can also support me by giving me so much space to think, by leaving me alone to think things through."* (SW2, W)

Source: Own processing

3.3 Students' preferences in the identified area - Social aspects

The analysis of social dimensions revealed a multilayered framework of interpersonal relationships in students' academic adaptation, spanning from familial bonds to broader social networks. The findings identified four critical dimensions: (1) the necessity of transparent communication for preventing misunderstandings and relationship development; (2) proactive helping behaviour that enhances both collective well-being and personal meaning; (3) the establishment and maintenance of personal boundaries as prerequisites for relationship health; and (4), environmental support manifested through trust and encouragement from social networks.

These social aspects create an interconnected network, where each dimension contributes to the student's overall social adaptation to the academic environment. In contrast, balancing the need for social interaction and maintaining personal space appears to be a critical factor in successful adaptation.

Table 3 Students' preferences in the area of social aspects

Category	Examples of qualitative quotes
The importance of open communication	*"I am a person who thinks about a lot of things, so I need to clarify things through direct, open communication."* (PD5,W)
Willingness to help others	*"It makes me happy to help others, and I want to be helpful to them."* (PS2, W) *"As I mentioned, I am a person who likes to help people, even those I don't love. My friends also know ... because then I am with them."* (PS5, W)
The need to respect boundaries	*"I am a person who needs my space and time. Sometimes I need to be alone with my thoughts; other times I need time to think about important decisions."* (PD6, M) *"Respecting boundaries is the basis of healthy relationships for me. When someone crosses my boundaries, I feel uncomfortable, stressing me out."* (SW3, W)
Need for support from others	*"Close people who believe in you, are always there for you and always support you are the best. That can support me in what I do, and it gives me energy."* (PS2, W) *"I am much stronger when people believe in me, not my family, just support from anyone."* (PS3, M)

Source: Own processing

3.3 Students' preferences in the identified area - Motivational factors

The analysis of motivational factors points to both external and internal motivators. Students show internal solid motivation manifested in the desire to face new challenges and achieve personal satisfaction with their performance, which is

confirmed by statements such as "*I enjoy discovering new things*" and *"I gave my best"* (PS3, M). At the same time, external motivation plays a significant role in emotional support, constructive criticism, and positive feedback from others, illustrated by the quote, *"I need to feel that someone believes in me"* (PS1, W). A specific motivational factor appears to positively influence others, where 'other people's happiness' functions as a catalyst for further development.

These motivational factors create a mutually reinforcing system. Constructive criticism and praise guide personal growth, while internal satisfaction and joy from helping others represent deeper, long-term motivators. This multi-layered motivational structure supports not only academic adaptation but also the overall personal development of students.

Table 4 Students' preferences in the area of Motivational factors

Category	Examples of qualitative quotes
New challenges	*"I enjoy discovering new things and pushing my limits. Every new challenge is an opportunity for me to learn something and improve."* (PS3, M)
Emotional support from others	*"I need to feel that someone believes in me, in my dreams and desires, it pushes me forward."* (PS1, W)
Inner satisfaction	*"The biggest motivation for me is the feeling that I gave my best and I can be proud of my performance."* (PD1, W)
Constructive criticism	*"It is crucial for my personal development when I receive constructive criticism from people."* (PS6, M)
Feedback and praise from other people	*"When I see a smile, joy on a face, or someone tells me that finally..."* (SW4, M) *"The happiness of other people that I see is like fuel for me - it gives me energy and motivation for life."* (PS5, W) *"Being there for me, honestly, tells me where I need to improve."* (PS1, W) *"...praise from others, from family... is important for me to have the motivation to continue working on myself."* (PD5, W)

Source: Own processing

3.4 Results of semiotic analysis

The semiotic visual analysis of students' One-page profiles revealed symbolic representations of values, personality characteristics, and motivations. These visual elements constitute a complex symbolic system facilitating a deeper interpretation of students' psychological dimensions during academic adaptation.

Table 5 The semiotic visual analysis of students' One-page profiles

Visual representation of topics	Symbols in One-Page Profile	
Significance and visualization	**Denotative**	**Connotative**
Values and priorities	Symbol of stability and security (e.g., house/tree) Symbol of education (book) Symbol of travel (compass)	Symbol of boundary lines (borders between people) Symbol of tree roots (family)
Personality characteristics	Symbol stone (for strength and stability) Symbol heart (for kindness)	Symbol of communication (interconnected circles/networks) Symbol of balance (scales) Symbol of energy (sun) Symbol of empathy (joined hands) Symbol of independence (single tree in the background)
Social aspects	Symbol of the most (connection) Symbol of the hug (relationships)	Symbol of boundary (demarcation of boundaries between people) Symbol of diamond (personality, uniqueness)
Motivational factors	Symbol of joined hands (cooperation with others)	Star symbol (praise) Ladder symbol (recognition, growth)

Source: Own processing

The visual analysis revealed five key domains represented through symbolic elements. Values and priorities are manifested through stability symbols (house, tree) and development indicators (book, compass), conveying security

needs and life direction. Personality characteristics emerged through diverse symbols ranging from stone (strength) to sun (energy) and joined hands (empathy). Social dimensions were predominantly represented by bridge and hug symbols, denoting connection and relationships. Motivational factors appeared through joined hands, star, and ladder symbols, representing cooperation, recognition, and growth respectively. This symbolic framework illuminates the multifaceted nature of students' academic adaptation experiences.

4 Discussion

Our findings describe the preferences of first-year university students. They provide a comprehensive picture of what students consider necessary for successful academic adaptation - emphasizing a balanced approach between personal development, social support, and educational growth. Analysis of students' preferences in academic adaptation points to consistency with the fundamental principles of Rogers' person-centred thinking (authenticity, congruence, unconditional acceptance, self-actualization, etc.) (Landor, 2018). The student emphasized the need for open communication and authenticity: *"...when I am myself..."* (PD1, W) reflects Rogers' concept of congruence. Recent research has stressed the importance of authenticity in education, especially for university students in the process of their education. Authentic environments and open communication can improve student engagement, well-being, and skill development (Walkington & Ommering, 2022; Svärd et al., 2022). Another area that students preferred was the need for support and trust from those around them: *"I am much stronger when people believe in me"* (PS3, M); or stressed: *"People close to me ... that can support me in what I do and give me energy"* (PS2, W). Social support from family and peers, as one of the preferences of support in the adaptation of first-year students, was also identified by Awang et al. (2014). This study confirmed that social support develops emotional adaptation and well-being. In addition to microcontext support (on an individual level), it is also important the support of the university community (teachers, students, dormitory staff, etc.), the research study has shown their importance, as it plays a key role in facilitating this adaptation (Lau et al., 2018).

Empathic understanding is noted: *"...sometimes it's enough for someone to perceive and listen to me, at least try to understand what it's like for me..."* SW3, W, which Rogers considered a key element in facilitating personal growth, is in students' ability to empathize with others and create a safe relationship environment (Landor, 2018). Research indicates gender-based variations in empathy levels, with females demonstrating higher scores, while value-semantic orientations correlate positively with altruism and acceptance (Anisimova & Krushelnitskaya, 2023). This finding aligns with participant responses*: "I can empathize with people, I don't have to tell them, they feel safe with me, empathy helps me too"* (PD3, W). Additionally, self-actualization tendencies manifest through expressed desires for personal growth, as evidenced by one participant's statement: *"I like learning new things, that's why I'm in school..."* (PS4, M), indicating intrinsic motivation for academic engagement. Within this area, research shows that this area is related to the development of self-esteem and self-management skills. Both contribute to improving the adaptation of first-year students (Lau et al., 2018; Awang et al., 2014). Students emphasize the need for a safe environment also through respecting boundaries *"... alone time"* (SW2, W) and *"...respecting boundaries is essential for me..."* (SW3, W), which Freire et al. (2020) identified as an essential prerequisite for effective personal development and the ability to respond to new situations.

The application of Rogers' person-centred theoretical framework facilitated comprehension of students' individual adaptation preferences. According to Mengoni (2021), visual semiotic analysis of One-Page Profiles revealed specific symbolic representations reflecting adaptation preferences across multiple dimensions. Environmental preferences are manifested through stability symbols (house, tree) and directional indicators (compass). Personal development

emerged through resilience symbolism (stone) and academic engagement (sun), while one participant emphasized that *"everything should be connected through understanding and empathy"* (PD3, W). Social dimensions centred on academic community connection (bridge) and supportive relationships (hug), complemented by motivational preferences for cooperation (group symbols) and achievement recognition (stars). These findings demonstrate how person-centred approaches illuminate crucial factors in first-year students' academic adaptation processes.

The analysis of preferences of beginning students for improving their academic adaptation carried out through One-Page Profiles, revealed the broad-spectrum nature of the adaptation process. Students prefer a balanced combination of internal and external factors supporting their adaptation. In the area of values and priorities, they emphasize the need for stability (set rules and expectations of education, support from family and other people) in combination with the need for self-development and growth (the meaning and purpose of education, acceptance of constructive criticism and feedback, balance in life). Their adaptation is significantly supported by specific personality characteristics, especially a positive attitude, perseverance, the ability to self-reflect, and purposefulness; perhaps there is no room for developing these qualities within university education. In social relations, they prefer clear, open communication and a balanced approach between the need for environmental support and maintaining one's boundaries. The results indicate that successful academic adaptation requires a comprehensive approach that considers students' characteristics and needs and the supportive elements of the educational environment.

Limitations of this study
The study's limitations encompass two critical dimensions. First, the recent implementation of new university accreditation criteria in Slovakia, described by Hall et al. (2019) presents an evolving context requiring future research to measure the impact of emerging support mechanisms. Second, methodological constraints arise from limited comparative research within Slovak higher education, restricting comprehensive validation of findings. Expansion of the qualitative design through additional methods, including interviews and student interpretations, would enhance understanding of individual preferences. While these findings contribute to the knowledge of student adaptation and well-being, they represent an initial examination of Slovakia's transforming tertiary education landscape.

5 Conclusion

This study highlights the effectiveness of person-centred thinking in understanding and supporting the adjustment preferences of first-year students in Slovakian higher education. Through visual and textual analysis using one-page profiles, the research shows that students prioritise a holistic approach to adjustment that integrates personal development, social support and academic growth. The results show that successful adjustment relies on a complex interplay of value systems that combine traditional supports with higher-order needs, personality traits that emphasise resilience and empathy, social aspects that balance connection with boundary maintenance, and motivational factors that integrate internal drive with external support.

The methodological approach, based on Rogers' person-centred principles, allowed for authentic expression of students' preferences through both visual and textual elements. While the study provides valuable insights for the development of targeted support mechanisms in Slovak higher education, further research using additional qualitative methods would strengthen the generalisability of the findings. The research contributes to the understanding of how person-centred approaches can enhance academic adjustment by respecting individual student preferences and needs, particularly in the context of evolving higher education standards and support systems.

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