**Frosty Finals and Snowy Strolls: Unravelling the Icebound Intellectual Character on Winter Recreation of Campus**

This qualitative study at Atatürk University, Erzurum, examines how winter influences student behaviors, identities, and campus experiences. Through thematic analysis of 26 in-depth interviews, a distinct 'Icebound Intellectual Character' emerges, characterized by resilience, adaptability, and adventure. The results underscore winter's profound transformation of student life's tangible and intangible dimensions. The study identifies six overarching themes, highlighting the transformative power of winter, emphasizing safety and infrastructure, and spotlighting enhanced cultural and academic exchanges. The winter season introduces a qualitatively different campus experience influenced by physical transformations and shifts in student perceptions. This research offers pivotal insights for university management and future studies on seasonality's role in academic life and recreation. Management implications highlight promoting winter-specific activities, enhancing safety and aesthetics, and leveraging winter's potential for enriching academic and cultural exchanges.

**Introduction**

Universities and their campuses are vital hubs for academic, cultural, and social experiences. The infrastructure, environment, and surrounding landscapes contribute not only to the academic pursuits of the students but also shape their overall well-being and personal development (Działek et al., 2023). Among the many factors that influence these experiences, seasonality stands out as a profound yet relatively unexplored dimension, especially in regions that witness significant climatic shifts throughout the year. The winter season, often characterized by its chilling temperatures, snow-covered landscapes, and shorter daylight hours, brings unique challenges and opportunities (Edwards et al., 2007; Steiger et al., 2023). While literature is abundant on how educational institutions can optimize physical infrastructure to enhance student experiences, there needs to be more clarity concerning the seasonal transformations, specifically winter, and their impact on student life and activities. This paucity becomes even more apparent when considering universities in regions with severe winters (Wang et al., 2023).

Atatürk University, located in Erzurum, Turkey, is one institution where winter plays a dominant role in shaping the campus experience (Yilmaz et al., 2019). With its vast campus grounds, a diverse array of academic disciplines, and a rich tapestry of cultural backgrounds represented by its student population, the university offers a unique microcosm to study the interplay between seasonality and student experiences (Demir et al., 2018; Demircioglu et al., 2017; Ozer et al., 2014). Given Erzurum's reputation for its long and harsh winters, one is prompted to ask: How does this extreme seasonality influence the academic and recreational pursuits of the students? Does the snowy transformation of the landscape alter their interactions, perceptions, and overall experience of the campus?

Recent academic explorations have touched upon the intricate relationship between environmental conditions and student well-being. For instance, studies by some academicians delve into how specific environmental factors, both within classrooms and in broader campus settings, impact student mental health and academic outcomes (Berman et al., 2018; Yildirim et al., 2011). However, these studies often overlook the seasonal dimension, particularly the transformative power of winter.

This research seeks to navigate this uncharted territory, focusing on the winter-centric experiences of students at Atatürk University. Drawing upon direct observations, interactions, and a rich tapestry of student narratives, the study aims to unearth the 'Icebound Intellectual Character' - a unique blend of adaptability, resilience, and adventure-seeking shaped by the winter season. While preliminary insights from some works provide a foundation (Liu et al., 2023; Whittaker et al., 2011), they do not specifically cater to the winter dynamics in an academic setting like Atatürk University. This study, therefore, hopes to fill this gap, offering actionable insights for universities worldwide that grapple with similar seasonal challenges.

**Literature Review**

***Winter Tourism Impacts***

The onset of winter recreation research primarily stemmed from the economic domain. Early studies, such as those emphasized the financial aspects of winter tourism (Bausch & Gartner, 2020; Moreno-Gené et al., 2018). They highlighted the immense revenue potential of ski resorts and winter sports, suggesting that regions with favorable winter conditions stood to benefit significantly from tourism. As one of the researcher noted, the economic viability of winter tourism was particularly apparent in European nations like Switzerland and Austria, which saw substantial revenue influxes during the winter months (Moreno-Gené et al., 2018). These findings were corroborated by subsequent studies, who emphasized winter tourism's direct and indirect economic advantages, ranging from job creation to infrastructural development (B. F. Bichler & B. Pikkemaat, 2021; Pütz et al., 2011).

Parallel to the economic discussions, the environmental implications of winter tourism began gaining scholarly attention by the late 20th century (Steiger et al., 2023; Tavallai, 2007). Anderson Brown (1998) highlighted concerns related to the ecological impact of ski resorts, pointing to issues like deforestation, water usage, and the disturbance of local fauna (Bao, 2023; Kangas et al., 2012). This ecological consciousness marked a pivotal shift in winter recreation research, with scholars increasingly advocating for sustainable and eco-friendly practices (Koenig & Abegg, 1997). It is argued for a balance between economic pursuits and environmental preservation, emphasizing the long-term benefits of sustainable winter tourism (Steiger, Posch, et al., 2020).

The turn of the century witnessed a gradual shift from purely economic and environmental discussions to a broader sociocultural perspective. Researchers began exploring the cultural significance of winter activities, particularly in regions where such activities were deeply ingrained in the local ethos. For instance, some studies delved into the cultural nuances of winter festivals shedding light on their historical significance and contemporary relevance (Mekuto & Tseane-Gumbi, 2017; Reichwein). Additionally, the impact of winter tourism on local communities became a focal point of investigation. Thompson and Roberts (2006) noted that winter tourism often led to cultural exchanges, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation between tourists and locals (Davras, 2021). However, they also pointed to potential pitfalls, such as cultural commodification and the dilution of local traditions (Christopoulou & Papadopoulos, 2001).

Universities and academic institutions, with their diverse populations and unique infrastructural layouts, have always presented a distinct context for exploring winter recreation (Gatti et al., 2022) (Steiger, Damm, et al., 2020). As research in this domain deepened, several facets became clear, shaping our understanding of winter activities within academic settings. One of the primary areas of exploration has been the psychological and physical benefits of winter recreation for students. A significant study related to this subject emphasizes the relationship between winter activities and enhanced student well-being (Stanaszek et al., 2023). His findings indicated that students participating in winter sports and activities reported higher satisfaction levels, reduced stress, and improved mental health. This was supported by another researcher who found that winter activities, particularly those that encouraged physical exertion like skiing or snowboarding, contributed to better physical health among students, reducing instances of seasonal affective disorders (B. Bichler & B. Pikkemaat, 2021).

**Materials and Methods**

In response to the research imperative of capturing nuanced insights into students' winter experiences at Atatürk University, Erzurum, we anchored our approach in a qualitative descriptive research design, as articulated by Sandelowski and colleagues (Kim et al., 2017). Distinct from more generic qualitative inquiries, our methodological choice was driven by the need to holistically understand students' current winter recreational behaviours and their aspirations for future campus-based winter activities.

We designed semi-structured interviews to foster open dialogue with students, allowing them to freely share their winter recreational experiences and express their recommendations for enhancing the winter campus atmosphere. Given the unique climatic conditions of Erzurum and the potential for a rich tapestry of winter activities, our questions probed not only into currently popular activities like snowball fights and winter campus walks but also explored the receptiveness towards introducing newer activities like campus ice skating and snowman building. The aim was not merely to catalogue activities but to delve into the underpinnings of student choices, preferences, and the influence of residence proximity to the diverse winter recreational opportunities available and those envisaged for the future.

In our endeavour, the semi-structured interviews were designed to evolve naturally, allowing for both inductive and deductive coding. Initial codes sprouted from recurring data patterns, encompassing pre-defined themes and emergent insights. A subsequent thematic analysis sculpted these codes into descriptive statements (Braun & Clarke, 2023), capturing the quintessence of students' winter recreational experiences and aspirations at Atatürk University, Erzurum.

***Study Setting***

Our exploration centred on the winter recreational landscape of Atatürk University, located in Erzurum, for a blend of methodological and practical considerations. Erzurum, recognized for hosting the 2011 Winter Universiade and EYOF 2017, often dubbed as the ‘winter capital’ of Turkey, boasts a rich tradition of winter activities given its cold climate and extended snowy seasons (Arınç, 2018). The university, sitting at the heart of this wintry city, offers a unique juxtaposition of academic pursuits and potential winter recreational activities, all within the proximity of student residences. In this research, Ataturk University is segmented into four distinct regions for investigation: Area 1: Residential Zone, Area 2: Central Campus, Area 3: West-I Campus, and Development Area: West-II Campus.

***Participant Selection***

Our interviewees comprised students of Atatürk University who have actively engaged in or showed interest in winter recreational activities on campus. The interviews were conducted in February 2023, targeting students who have spent considerable time on campus during winter. This focus on students with a recurring winter presence on campus was deliberate; as such individuals are more likely to offer in-depth, vivid descriptions of their experiences and perceptions. Given our objective to uncover a wide range of student experiences, we adopted a maximum variation purposive selection technique (Coyne, 1997). As described by Palinkas et al. (2015), this method is particularly effective for gathering diverse and rich information without exhausting resources (Palinkas et al., 2015). We aimed for a diverse sample, factoring in various academic disciplines, years of study, and prior winter activity engagements (e.g., participation in organized winter events and frequency of casual winter activities).

To be eligible, participants had to be enrolled students of Atatürk University and have engaged in or shown interest in winter activities on campus, at least occasionally, during the recent winter season. This frequency criterion ensured that participants had enough exposure to winter recreation on campus to offer detailed insights while allowing for a broader representation, including those who might not be avid winter enthusiasts. To attract participants, we reached out through university-affiliated channels like student clubs, campus email newsletters, and social media groups. Additionally, we tapped into word-of-mouth referrals, ensuring a natural participation spread. Efforts were also made to encourage participation from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, utilizing electronic flyers shared within culturally-focused student organizations and online platforms.

***Data Collection and Analysis***

We utilized one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018) to capture the nuanced winter experiences and preferences of Atatürk University students. From the participant pool, 26 students were interviewed. However, as with many qualitative endeavors, not all data collected was used. In our case, all interviews were retained for analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of student perspectives.

The decision to conclude interviews after the 26th participant was multifaceted. Firstly, data saturation was reached as the latter interviews began echoing sentiments and insights from earlier participants, offering minimal new substantive information regarding the study's central themes (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2016). Secondly, we assessed the diversity of participants concerning our sampling criteria and determined it satisfactory. Given the campus-centric nature of the study and its convenience to the participants, all interviews were conducted in person on Atatürk University grounds.

Our interview approach intertwined targeted questions about existing winter activities on the Atatürk University campus with broader discussions, aiming to dive deep into students' lived experiences and their visions for winter recreation. Utilizing the semi-structured methodology, we operated with an established set of questions but remained receptive to organic conversations and student-led insights, which enriched the overall narrative. This adaptability was instrumental in comprehensively capturing the diverse nature of students' winter engagements and their hopes for future recreational additions on campus. Feedback from the inaugural two interviews prompted subtle refinements to our interview guide, ensuring a harmonized alignment with the pulse of student perspectives. Across our dialogues with the 26 students – 14 males and 12 females – we accumulated 740 minutes of insightful conversations. Individual interviews spanned a range, with some being concise at 20 minutes, while others provided more extended narratives of up to 60 minutes, resulting in an average duration of 28.5 minutes per session.

Recordings of the interviews and subsequent transcriptions served as the primary data for our investigation, aligning with established qualitative research practices (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). We employed the qualitative software NVivo 12 (QRS International) to manage and organize the transcribed data effectively.

Our analysis process involved three distinct yet interconnected steps:

1. We used an Excel spreadsheet to collate demographic details, academic disciplines, and historical engagement in winter recreational activities. This allowed us to sketch the participants' individual and collective profiles, offering a demographic backdrop against which their perspectives could be understood.

2. An inductive content analysis followed discerning descriptive codes from the transcripts. This process highlighted recurring sentiments, preferences for current winter activities, and aspirations for future recreational endeavors on the Atatürk University campus (Guest et al., 2012).

3. Delving deeper, we utilized these codes to craft overarching themes. These themes, articulated in summary statements, were substantiated with direct quotes from participants, providing authentic voices to the narrative and painting a comprehensive picture of student experiences and aspirations regarding winter recreation at Atatürk University, Erzurum.

In line with established practices, our thematic analysis unfolded as a cyclic, multi-staged endeavor, commencing with an in-depth immersion into the collected data and culminating in the elucidation of the implications of our findings (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018; Guest et al., 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Throughout this analytical journey, we actively restructured the data, amalgamated overlapping insights, and forged new categories. Our ultimate aim was to distill distinct themes that encapsulated students' multifaceted experiences and aspirations regarding winter recreation at Atatürk University.

We heeded best practices for reporting qualitative research to ensure a rigorous and transparent presentation of our findings. We meticulously differentiated between the genuine expressions of the students and our interpretative lens. By integrating narrative snippets from most participants, we aspired to provide an authentic voice to our results. Moreover, we employed metaphorical representations to encapsulate our understanding of students' winter experiences and aspirations on campus (Guest et al., 2012; Sandelowski, 1998).

We undertook several methodological precautions to bolster the credibility and reliability of our study's findings. Echoing the recommendations of Rose & Johnson (2020), the primary investigator painstakingly transcribed each interview verbatim. This meticulous approach ensured the precision and richness of the data and facilitated a deep immersion into the students' winter experiences and aspirations on campus.

To bolster qualitative reliability, we juxtaposed verbatim excerpts from the transcripts alongside their corresponding themes. This iterative process, called 'deep inspection' (Rose & Johnson, 2020), enabled us to continuously validate the emergent themes against the raw voices of the participants. We also made a conscious effort to delineate our data collection and analytical procedures transparently, specifying the contours of each theme to provide clarity.

Addressing qualitative validity, we subjected our methods and derived findings to four external auditors' scrutiny, adhering to the best practices suggested by Rose & Johnson (2020). Their evaluations reinforced the robustness of our research approach and the authenticity of the insights gleaned from the student community at Atatürk University, Erzurum.

**Results**

***Demographic Profiles***

Table 1 provides a consolidated demographic overview of the 26 students interviewed (12 females, 14 males) from Atatürk University, Erzurum. The average age of female participants was 21, while for males, it was 23 (Mean = 22; Min. = 18, Max. = 27). This age range captures the typical undergraduate and early graduate student demographic, offering a representative view of the student community. Table 2 encapsulates the participants' winter recreational profiles, highlighting their current campus engagements and aspirations for potential future activities.

**Table 1:** Demographic attributes of participants

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Attribute** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **Gender** |  |  |
| Female | 12 | 46.2 |
| Male | 14 | 53.8 |
| **Age** |  |  |
| 18-21 | 10 | 38.5 |
| 22-25 | 11 | 42.3 |
| 26-29 | 5 | 19.2 |
| **Nationality** |  |  |
| Turkish | 23 | 88.5 |
| International | 3 | 11.5 |
| **Year of Study** |  |  |
| Freshman | 6 | 23.1 |
| Sophomore | 7 | 26.9 |
| Junior | 6 | 23.1 |
| Senior | 5 | 19.2 |
| Graduate Student | 2 | 7.7 |
| **Faculty** |  |  |
| Engineering | 3 | 11.5 |
| Arts & Sciences | 2 | 7.7 |
| Business | 2 | 7.7 |
| Health Sciences | 4 | 15.4 |
| Dentistry | 2 | 7.7 |
| Education | 2 | 7.7 |
| Architecture | 1 | 3.8 |
| Agriculture  | 2 | 7.7 |
| Law | 2 | 7.7 |
| Communication | 2 | 7.7 |
| Sports | 4 | 15.4 |
| **Residence** |  |  |
| On-Campus | 19 | 73.1 |
| Off-Campus | 7 | 26.9 |

***Winter Recreation Patterns and Preferences***

The allure of winter recreation on the Atatürk University campus was palpable among the students, with patterns of engagement reflecting a diverse blend of frequency, choice of locales, and type of activities (Table 2). On average, students immersed themselves in winter activities 3.4 times a week, indicating a robust affinity for embracing the winter spirit.

With its architecturally striking edifices and sprawling open spaces, the campus became a winter wonderland, offering students myriad recreational avenues. For many, snowball fights were not just a spontaneous game but an essential winter ritual, celebrated with gusto across various spots on campus. Winter campus tours, often organized or sometimes impromptu, emerged as a favored activity. These tours provided a serene break from academic rigors and spotlighted the university's transformative beauty during winter. Interestingly, while activities like sledding on campus grounds and snow sculpture building were less prevalent, they did have their niche enthusiasts, particularly during events or competitions. The reasons varied, from lack of proper equipment to unfamiliarity with the activity. The habitual winter activities for most students revolved around snowball fights and winter campus walks, which were almost daily routines for many. Special occasions such as winter festivals drew considerable attention, turning the campus into a hub of vibrant winter festivities. Likewise, although less frequent, outdoor group exercises witnessed enthusiastic participation, combining fitness with fun in the chilly outdoors. Students found warmth in shared moments amid the icy breezes and snowy landscapes. A significant trend was the inclination towards coffee or hot chocolate breaks. These were not just about the beverages; they symbolized shared warmth, camaraderie, and moments of respite, enjoyed at various cozy outdoor spots scattered across the campus.

**Table 2:** Current and Suggested Winter Recreation Activities at Atatürk University, Erzurum Campus

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Frequency/Activity** | **Current Participation (Number of Students)** | **Percentage (%)** | **Suggested for Future Implementation** |
| Winter Recreation Participation Frequency (self-reported average) |  |  |  |
| 1-2 times a week | 10 | 38 |  |
| 3-4 times a week | 8 | 31 |  |
| 5-7 times a week | 8 | 31 |  |
| Campus Winter Activities |  |  |  |
| Snowball fights | 20 | 77 |  |
| Winter campus tours/walks | 16 | 62 |  |
| Sledding on campus grounds | 12 | 46 |  |
| Snow sculpture building (casual or competition) | 10 | 38 |  |
| Study breaks at outdoor campus firepits | 14 | 54 |  |
| Outdoor winter group exercises (e.g., yoga, aerobics) | 7 | 27 |  |
| Campus winter festivals/events | 18 | 69 |  |
| Coffee or hot chocolate breaks at outdoor campus spots | 20 | 77 |  |
| Indoor activities (e.g., winter-themed workshops) | - | - | ✓ |
| Campus ice skating | - | - | ✓ |
| Snowshoeing around campus | - | - | ✓ |
| Cross country skiing | - | - | ✓ |
| Ice hockey or broomball on campus ponds | - | - | ✓ |
| Winter bonfires | - | - | ✓ |
| Snowman building | - | - | ✓ |
| Winter photography on campus | - | - | ✓ |
|  |  |  |  |

While the current offerings were cherished, aspirations for more were evident. A notable chunk of interviewees expressed a fervent wish for activities not yet available on campus. The allure of campus ice skating, the coziness of winter bonfires, and the potential for snowshoeing around campus grounds were recurrent themes in their wish lists. Such feedback offers valuable insights, suggesting avenues for the university to elevate its winter recreation repertoire further, thereby enriching the winter experience for its students.

***Codes and Themes***

Analysis of the 26 interviews with students at Atatürk University, Erzurum, revealed a vivid tapestry of experiences and aspirations related to winter recreation on campus. The students consistently emphasized the transformative nature of winter, with the campus undergoing a metamorphosis that offers both challenges and opportunities for recreation. The analysis highlighted 35 descriptive codes concerning the winter recreation setting, organized into five salient categories: Campus Environment, Student Dynamics, Event Organization, Future Potential, and Safety and infrastructure. These are meticulously laid out in Table 3 and will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

**Table 3:** Descriptive codes about winter recreation setting at Atatürk University, considering future implementations

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Campus Bio-Environment** | **Student Dynamics** | **Event Organization** | **Future Potential** | **Safety & Infrastructure** |
| Snow-covered campus grounds | Group dynamics camaraderie | Availability of winter equipment | Enthusiasm for proposed activities | Maintenance of pathways in snow |
| Potential for ice rinks | Academic stress relief via new activities | Organization of new winter-themed events | Anticipation for new experiences | Safety protocols for new activities |
| Diminished Daylight hours | Shared experiences during Winter | Designated areas for activities | Need for indoor winter spaces | Ice patch warnings management |
| Winter flora views | Cultural exchanges during winter festivals | Training for new activities | Feedback loop for event improvement | Emergency preparedness during snow |
| Cold-air indoor gatherings | Informal meetups at popular spots | Promotion campaigns for new events | Potential partnerships with local winter businesses | Infrastructure adjustments for suggested activities |
| Enhanced wildlife views with new winter spots | Formation of winter activity clubs | Expansion of winter equipment rental services | Exploration of new winter recreational trends | Regular inspection equipment quality checks |

The focal point of our research was to delve into how students at Atatürk University, Erzurum, perceive the winter recreation setting on campus. Our descriptive coding process illuminated that students discern many campus bio-environment, student dynamics, event organization, future potential, and safety infrastructure attributes that undergo notable transformations during winter (Table 3). These shifts, both in the physical environment and the social milieu, culminate in crafting a distinctive recreation experience during winter. Drawing parallels, one might recall the vivid distinction between summer and winter in the expansive landscapes of national parks. Similarly, the winter setting at Atatürk University morphs the campus into a unique ‘Icebound Intellectual Character’

Building on our descriptive codes, we can articulate the student perceptions into five overarching themes that define the winter recreation setting and the Icebound Intellectual Character at Atatürk University. According to the student participants, winter recreation settings on campus:

• Foster Community and Camaraderie: The winter setting amplifies group dynamics, collaborations, and shared experiences, turning the campus into a hub of communal warmth amidst the cold.

• Ignite a Sense of Novelty: The transformed landscape, from snow-covered grounds to potential ice rinks, introduces a fresh allure, making the familiar seem intriguingly new.

• Expand the Realm of Recreational Possibilities: The snowy landscape and the anticipation of new experiences offer broader outdoor and indoor recreation avenues.

• Enhance Cultural and Academic Exchanges: Winter brings festivals, informal meetups, and opportunities for cultural and academic exchanges, enriching the student experience.

• Prioritize Safety and Infrastructure: The emphasis on maintaining pathways, introducing safety protocols, and ensuring emergency preparedness underlines the university's commitment to student safety.

*Insert Figures 1 and 2 here.*

***Winter Recreation Settings Foster Community and Camaraderie***

At the heart of the winter experience at Atatürk University, Erzurum, is the enhanced sense of community and camaraderie. With its distinct challenges and allure, the winter setting nurtures collective experiences that bring students closer together. For many students, winter is not just about the cold and snow but shared moments, collective joys, and mutual challenges. Student 5 beautifully encapsulated this sentiment: ‘During winter, there is this unspoken bond among us. We are in this together, whether helping each other navigate slippery paths near West-I or teaming up for a snowball fight near the Central Campus.’ The very essence of winter on campus seems to amplify group dynamics. Student 19 remarked, ‘The chilly nights near the Residential region are best spent with friends, sharing stories, sipping tea, and experiencing winter as one big university family.’

The theme of camaraderie was further echoed by Student 13, who shared, ‘Winter brings out the best in us. It's as if the cold outside warms our hearts. We collaborate, share, and enjoy the campus life more.’ This shared sentiment among students reveals that while winter poses its challenges, the collective spirit of the students transforms it into an opportunity for bonding. The prominence of this community spirit likely depends on individual experiences, their circle of friends, and their engagement with winter activities on campus. However, the overarching sentiment remains consistent: Winter at Atatürk University is a time of strengthened bonds and heightened camaraderie.

***Winter Transforms the Familiar into the Novel***

When winter blankets the Atatürk University campus in its crystalline embrace, the familiar pathways, buildings, and open spaces undergo a profound metamorphosis. This transformative power of winter, as expressed by many students, adds layers of novelty and intrigue to places they have frequented countless times.

Student 9's reflections encapsulate this sentiment perfectly. They described the Central Campus, often bustling with activity, as undergoing a rebirth during winter. ‘Every snowfall paints the campus in a fresh light. Buildings I pass by daily, like the Rectorship building, suddenly pop out with snow-covered roofs and ledges, looking like scenes from a winter postcard,’ remarked Student 9. The juxtaposition of the familiar with the novel creates a unique charm, making every winter day on campus blend comfort and discovery.

Echoing this sentiment, Student 13 mentioned, ‘Winter mornings at the central region are surreal. The trees, cloaked in snow, stand like silent sentinels, and the entire area feels like a tranquil winter wonderland, so different from its usual lively self.’ The sentiment of rediscovery extends beyond the general campus ambiance. Specific pathways, trails, and even the flora and fauna come alive in new ways. Student 25, an avid runner, shared their winter experiences, ‘Jogging near the Residential zone during winter is like charting a new trail. The snow masks the familiar turns and bends, making every run an adventure.’

Winter also seems to sharpen the observational skills of students. The pristine snow becomes a canvas, capturing the footprints of campus wildlife. Student 16's experience epitomizes this: ‘Discovering animal tracks, especially near the West-II campus, is like piecing together a story. Each footprint hints at the nocturnal escapades of rabbits, cats, and other creatures.’ Furthermore, Student 21 added a perspective on the altered campus soundscape, ‘Winter brings a hushed serenity. The muffled footsteps on snow replace the usual cacophony of voices, birds, and rustling leaves. It's both eerie and beautiful.’ Winter at Atatürk University is more than just a season; it is an experience, a transformation of the known into the mysterious, the mundane into the magical. Through the eyes of its students, the campus becomes a realm of endless discovery, with each snowflake adding to its winter narrative.

***Winter Amplifies Recreational Potential on Campus***

For many students at Atatürk University, winter not only transforms the aesthetics of the campus but also magnifies the range of activities and recreational spaces available. The blanket of snow and the chill in the air introduce many possibilities for outdoor enjoyment. Student 5, an avid outdoor enthusiast, shared, ‘Winter brings a certain freedom to the campus. The snow-covered open spaces, especially near the West-I and West-II campuses, become natural arenas for snowball fights, snowman building, and even impromptu sledding.’ This expansion of recreational terrain is not just limited to snowy grounds. Student 18 remarked, ‘The frozen ponds near the Central region offer a perfect spot for ice skating. It's fascinating how winter adds layers to our usual recreational spots.’

The freedom to explore and the increased accessibility during winter lead to heightened creativity among students. Unlike the well-trodden paths and designated activity areas during other seasons, Winter presents a canvas for students to chart their adventures. Student 15, known for their adventurous spirit, commented, ‘Winter on campus is like a giant playground. You're not just walking on paths but creating your own trails in the snow.’ This sense of freedom and expansion is intrinsically linked to a more profound sense of exploration and discovery. Student 23, reflecting on their winter experiences, mentioned, ‘Every winter day on campus is a mini-adventure. The snow-covered grounds near the Residential zone become perfect for making snow angels or just leaving footprints. It's all about leaving your mark and creating memories.’

***Winter Deepens Cultural and Academic Bonds***

Atatürk University's winter season does more than transform the landscape. It crafts an environment ripe for more profound cultural and academic exchanges, fostering a sense of community and shared experience among the students. Many students emphasized how winter, with its unique set of experiences, has become a catalyst for cultural dialogues. Student 5, originally from a temperate climate, remarked, ‘The chill of winter brought warmth in interactions. Each snowfall, each winter festivity at the campus opened doors to conversations, allowing me to delve into the diverse winter traditions of my peers. It's like every snowflake carried a story from a different part of the world.’

These exchanges are not restricted to informal settings alone. The academic realm sees a heightened sense of collaboration during the colder months. Student 12 elaborated, ‘Winter study sessions are more than just about academics. As we gather indoors, away from the cold, our discussions seamlessly blend course materials with personal winter anecdotes, making learning a holistic experience.’ The university's winter festivals stand out as moments of vivid cultural celebration. Recalling a memorable event, Student 17 said, ‘The winter festival at the Central Campus was not just an event; it was a cultural tapestry. Witnessing students proudly showcasing their regional winter traditions, I felt I was on a journey, traveling from one region to another with every stall I visited.’

Beyond these exchanges, winter also solidifies the student community's bond. The challenges the season poses, be it navigating snow-covered pathways or dealing with unexpected class cancellations, bring students together in mutual understanding and support. Student 24 insightfully noted, ‘There's a camaraderie that winter builds. Whether it's helping each other with heavy winter wear, sharing notes from a missed class due to a snowstorm, or simply huddling together for warmth during outdoor events, every winter gesture adds a thread to the fabric of our university community.’

***Prioritize Safety and Infrastructure during the Winter***

The winter months at Atatürk University bring forth a transformed landscape and challenges related to mobility, safety, and infrastructure. Recognizing this, students frequently highlighted the importance of maintaining pathways, implementing safety protocols, and ensuring the campus infrastructure is primed for the cold months.

Student 6 remarked on the essential nature of clear pathways during winter: ‘Navigating through the campus, especially near the Faculty region, can be tricky with all the snow. Pathways must be regularly cleared to get to our classes safely.’ The maintenance of pathways is about convenience and preventing accidents due to slipping on icy patches. Furthermore, as the university looks to introduce new winter activities, safety protocols' emphasis becomes paramount. Student 19 pointed out, ‘I'm thrilled about the prospect of ice-skating near the Sports Faculty, but it's essential to have safety measures in place. First-aid stations and trained personnel should be accessible.’

Emergency preparedness is another area students touched upon, especially considering the unpredictable nature of winter weather. Student 11 shared a personal experience: ‘Last winter, a sudden snowstorm caught many of us off guard. It highlighted the need for emergency stations and perhaps even a dedicated app or platform to alert students about severe weather conditions.’ Infrastructure adjustments, particularly for new activities, were also mentioned by several students. Student 16 emphasized, ‘If we are considering setting up ice rinks or snow sports areas, we need to ensure the infrastructure supports these activities, from quality checks of equipment to ensuring the spaces are safe for use.’

***Shaping the 'Icebound Intellectual Character' at Atatürk University***

The 'Icebound Intellectual Character' emerging from our analysis reveals a multifaceted character influenced by the distinct winter setting of Atatürk University. This persona is defined by three primary dimensions: Resilience, Adaptability, and a Spirit of Adventure, each intertwined with specific themes and experiences shared by the students.

**Table 4:** Icebound Intellectual Character and Associated Themes at Atatürk University

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Icebound Intellectual Character** | **Associated Themes & Codes** | **Frequency**  | **Correlation**  |
| *Resilience* | - Shared experiences during winter<br>- Snow-covered campus grounds<br>- Cold air & indoor gatherings<br>- Safety protocols for new activities | 45 mentions | Strong |
| *Adaptability* | - Organization of new winter-themed events<br>- Feedback loop for event improvement<br>- Availability of winter equipment<br>- Expansion of winter equipment rental services | 38 mentions | Moderate |
| *Spirit of Adventure* | - Snowy landscapes ideal for snowman building<br>- Formation of winter activity clubs<br>- Enhanced wildlife views with new winter spots<br>- Increased collaborations with city events | 52 mentions | Strong |

*Resilience*

The dimension of resilience strongly correlates with themes such as shared experiences during winter, the physical reality of a snow-covered campus, and the communal experiences in cold air and indoor gatherings. This dimension is best exemplified by the frequency count, indicating that resilience-related themes were mentioned 45 times by the participants. Students' accounts vividly portray their endurance and tenacity in navigating winter challenges. As Student 4 mentioned, ‘The snow, the cold – they are all part of the winter experience at Atatürk. It's about embracing them and finding warmth in shared experiences.’ Another testament to this resilience is the emphasis on safety, as highlighted by Student 8's observation: ‘The University’s efforts in ensuring pathways are clear during snowfalls makes us feel safe and looked after.’

*Adaptability*

Adaptability, with a moderate correlation, encompasses the organizational aspects of winter, including new winter-themed events, the importance of feedback, and the equipment's availability. As mentioned 38 times, this dimension underscores the students' flexibility and readiness to modify their routines and embrace new winter activities. Student 12's comment shows this adaptability: ‘I've attended winter-themed events that I never thought I'd be a part of. It's all about adapting and enjoying what the season offers.’ The emphasis on equipment availability and expansion of rental services also indicates a proactive approach to winter. Student 16 shared, ‘Having access to winter equipment rentals on campus allows us to try new activities without hefty investments.’

*Spirit of Adventure*

Arguably, the most vibrant dimension, the Spirit of Adventure, is strongly tied to the allure of snowy landscapes, the formation of winter activity clubs, enhanced wildlife views, and collaborations with city events. This dimension had the highest frequency, with 52 mentions. The adventurous spirit of students is evident in their eagerness to explore and discover. Student 20 enthusiastically noted, ‘Building a snowman or spotting animal tracks in the snow feels like an adventure every time.’ This spirit is further magnified by forming winter activity clubs and collaborations with city events, suggesting a proactive approach to winter recreation. As Student 24 eloquently put it, ‘Winter doesn't confine us; it opens a world of adventures. From joining winter clubs to attending city events, there's always something new to explore.’

In synthesizing these findings, it is evident that winter at Atatürk University does not merely represent a change in weather; it catalyzes a transformation in student experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. The 'Icebound Intellectual Character' is a testament to the student's ability to endure but thrive and flourish in winter, embodying resilience, adaptability, and an unyielding spirit of adventure.

**DISCUSSION**

The transformative power of winter on university campuses, notably Atatürk University, has emerged as a focal point of our research. It is intriguing how the season's characteristics, including tangible (snow, cold temperatures) and intangible (serenity, novelty), impact students' daily lives, academic pursuits, and recreational activities. Notably, these observations are aligned with previous research that underscores the profound influence of seasonal attributes on experiential outcomes (Bricker et al., 2015; Brownlee & Bricker, 2014; May-West et al., 2018).

Atatürk University, winter is not merely a season but a backdrop that molds and shapes student interactions, experiences, and aspirations. As we termed it, the 'Icebound Intellectual Character encapsulates students' resilience, adaptability, and adventurous spirit as they navigate and leverage the winter setting for diverse purposes. This persona is reminiscent of findings by Jir'asek & Jiraskov' 'a (2014) and Perrin-Malterre & Chanteloup (2018), who highlighted the role of seasons in influencing outdoor recreational behaviors and cultural exchanges.

Moreover, the study sheds light on the potential of winter settings in fostering cultural and academic exchanges. With its unique challenges and opportunities, winter catalyzes students to seek collaborative learning experiences, engage in cultural festivities, and partake in recreational activities. Such findings are supported by research conducted by Roult et al. (2017) and Svoboda et al. (2015), who emphasized the significance of seasonal contexts in shaping communal interactions and collaborative endeavors.

Additionally, our research stresses the importance of safety and infrastructure in enhancing the winter experience on campus. As observed in studies by Wigglesworth Heintzman (2017), the physical environment, when optimized for safety and accessibility, can profoundly impact students' perceptions and experiences. At Atatürk University, students' feedback on the need for improved infrastructure, safety protocols, and indoor spaces during winter underscores the university's role in shaping positive winter experiences.

**The Transformative Power of Winter**

The profound impact of winter on university campuses, especially Atatürk University, has been a central theme throughout this study. The season, with its blend of tangible elements like snow and cold and intangible facets such as serenity and novelty, plays a pivotal role in reshaping the university experience. This physical and psychological transformation influences students' perceptions, emotions, and behaviors.

The snow-covered landscapes, often described as ‘blank canvases,’ offer students a fresh perspective on familiar spaces. This sense of renewal and rediscovery, where everyday pathways and landmarks become novel terrains, enhances their connection with the environment. It encourages exploration, creativity, and a deeper appreciation for nature's cyclical processes. Perrin-Malterre and Chanteloup (2018) noted that such interactions with natural landscapes, particularly during winter, can foster improved student well-being and cognitive function.

Furthermore, the intangible aspect of winter's serenity, accentuated by the muffled sounds and the soft glow of snow, provides a backdrop for introspection and contemplation. Students often report feeling more connected to their surroundings, peers, and themselves during these quiet moments. Such observations mirror findings by Vroegop (2014), who emphasized the therapeutic and rejuvenating effects of serene winter landscapes on individuals.

However, it is not just the tranquility of winter that captivates. The season's challenges, such as navigating icy pathways or braving cold winds, instill a sense of resilience and adaptability in students. These experiences teach them the importance of preparation, caution, and perseverance—invaluable skills both within and outside the academic realm. This aligns with research by Wigglesworth and Heintzman (2017), highlighting the role of challenging outdoor environments in fostering resilience and adaptability.

In summation, the transformative power of winter extends far beyond aesthetic changes. It molds experiences, catalyzes personal growth, and reshapes the very fabric of campus life. As noted by May-West et al. (2018), understanding these transformations is essential for institutions aiming to harness the full potential of their winter landscapes.

**Emergence of the 'Icebound Intellectual Character'**

Winter at Atatürk University does more than alter the physical landscape; it crafts a unique student archetype. This 'Icebound Intellectual Character' crystallizes as students confront and embrace the season's challenges and opportunities. Students transform with each snowfall, icy pathway, and winter event, cultivating resilience, adaptability, and an innate spirit of adventure.

Resilience is most evident as students face the winter's physical challenges head-on. From trudging through thick snow to enduring biting cold winds, they develop a tenacity that transcends the season. This resilience is about braving the cold and finding ways to make the most of it through snowball fights, building snowmen, or partaking in winter sports. As highlighted by Svoboda et al. (2015), such resilient behaviors during challenging climatic conditions can significantly boost an individual's self-confidence and coping mechanisms.

Adaptability shines through as students find innovative ways to engage with their surroundings and peers. Winter, with its unique set of challenges, demands a flexible approach to daily routines and activities. Whether adapting to new study spots, changing recreational activities, or altering fashion choices to combat the cold, students continually adjust and evolve. Jir'asek & Jiraskov' 'a (2014) have emphasized similar sentiments, noting that seasonal shifts necessitate behavioral adaptability, especially in academic settings.

Lastly, the spirit of adventure is omnipresent. Encouraged by the transformed campus and the plethora of winter activities, students are often more willing to step out of their comfort zones. They explore new spots, try winter sports, and engage in cultural exchanges around winter festivals. Perrin-Malterre Chanteloup (2018) noted that this sense of adventure can catalyze personal growth, fostering open-mindedness and a zest for new experiences.

Essentially, the 'Icebound Intellectual Character' is not a mere by-product of the season. It is a testament to how students of Atatürk University respond, adapt, and thrive amidst the challenges and beauties of winter. This evolution of character, rooted in the winter experience, offers invaluable insights into the transformative power of seasons on student development.

**Cultural and Academic Exchanges in Winter**

The winter season at Atatürk University metamorphoses into a vibrant tapestry of shared experiences, bridging cultural divides and fostering academic collaborations. As the campus transforms with each snowflake, it also brings forth a renewed sense of community and camaraderie among students.

Cultural Fusion: Winter is a medium that brings together diverse traditions and practices. The season allows students from different backgrounds to showcase their regional winter customs, creating a melting pot of cultural experiences. Whether it is a traditional winter dish from the East or a dance performance rooted in the West, the campus becomes a stage for cultural expression. Events like the Winter Festival offer students a platform to exhibit, learn, and appreciate the myriad traditions that their peers bring. This cultural immersion, as highlighted by Roult et al. (2017), can significantly enhance students' global perspectives, making them more open-minded and accepting.

Academic Collaborations: With its indoor bias, winter creates conducive environments for intellectual pursuits. Group study sessions, academic workshops, and seminars increase participation during the colder months. As students come together, discussions often transcend academic boundaries, leading to interdisciplinary debates and brainstorming sessions. These collaborative learning experiences, as emphasized by Svoboda et al. (2015), enhance academic prowess and instill teamwork and collective problem-solving skills.

Recreational Endeavors: The season is not just about introspection and learning; it is also a time for adventure and exploration. The plethora of winter activities, from snow sports to indoor games, provides ample opportunities for students to unwind, relax, and rejuvenate. These recreational endeavors often become informal learning and networking platforms where skills are traded, and friendships are forged.

Fostering Global Connections: With an influx of international students, winter becomes a conduit for global interactions. Experiencing the first snowfall, celebrating global winter festivals, or sharing winter anecdotes from different parts fosters a sense of global unity and shared experiences.

In conclusion, winter at Atatürk University does more than alter the physical environment; it reshapes the academic and cultural dynamics of the campus. It becomes a season of exploration, learning, and togetherness, genuinely epitomizing the spirit of global education.

**Prioritizing Safety and Infrastructure**

The imperative of safety and robust infrastructure during winter is a recurrent theme, evident in the responses of Atatürk University students. While enchanting, the winter season brings unique challenges, making the maintenance and adaptation of campus facilities essential for ensuring a positive and secure environment.

Feedback-Driven Improvements: Students' voices become crucial in identifying areas for improvement. Feedback loops established by the university are instrumental in gauging student needs and implementing requisite enhancements. The suggestions range from better maintenance of pathways to the establishment of warm, cozy indoor spaces for relaxation and study. This proactive approach to incorporating student input reflects a commitment to fostering an environment conducive to academic pursuits and leisure activities.

Adaptive Safety Protocols: Introducing tailored safety protocols during winter indicates the university's dedication to student well-being. Initiatives such as ice patch warnings, emergency preparedness plans, and the implementation of first-aid stations at strategic locations are a testament to this commitment. These measures, as supported by the research of Wigglesworth Heintzman (2017), play a pivotal role in shaping students’ sense of security and their overall winter experience.

Infrastructure Adjustments: The transformation of the campus landscape during winter necessitates adaptive infrastructure. Adjustments such as enhanced lighting, installation of handrails, and prompt snow removal are not just reactive measures but proactive strategies to ensure seamless mobility and accessibility. These infrastructural enhancements minimize disruptions and facilitate a smoother adaptation to the winter season.

Warm Indoor Spaces: Creating warm, welcoming indoor spaces emerges as a significant need, highlighted by students. These spaces are envisioned as sanctuaries against the biting cold, where students can unwind, socialize, and immerse themselves in academic endeavors. The availability of such spaces is integral to fostering a sense of comfort and belonging during the colder months.

Impact on Student Perceptions: The emphasis on safety and infrastructure significantly influences how students perceive and experience winter on campus. A well-maintained and secure environment alleviates potential concerns and enriches the winter experience, allowing students to fully embrace and enjoy the season's offerings.

A central implication drawn from our exploration is that experiences during the non-winter seasons at Atatürk University are not directly transferrable to the winter context. This distinction emphasizes the need for researchers studying campus life and activities to be cognizant of the seasonal differences and their potential impact on student experiences. Drawing conclusions based on observations from one season may not accurately reflect the dynamics of another season, underscoring the need for comprehensive year-round studies (Bricker et al., 2015).

This investigation also holds significance for studies centered on cultural and academic exchanges, mainly seasonally influenced ones. While the cultural context has been a focal point of many academic discourses (May-West et al., 2018), there is a growing recognition that the climatic and seasonal aspects, such as winter, can significantly shape these exchanges. A campus's ambiance and associated winter activities can offer unique insights into the cultural and academic dynamics (Jir'asek & Jiraskov' 'a, 2014).

Furthermore, the evolving 'Icebound Intellectual Character,' characterized by resilience, adaptability, and a spirit of adventure, underscores the influence of the campus environment on student identity. Aspects of the physical environment, including winter, are intricately linked to personal narratives and campus attachments (Brehm, 2007). Alterations in the environment, such as introducing new winter-related infrastructure or activities, can subsequently influence these narratives and attachments (Davenport & Anderson, 2005).

Given that the duration of engagement with a particular setting impacts one's perception (Smaldone et al., 2017), it is conceivable that students' prolonged exposure to winter at Atatürk University deepens their connection and understanding of the season. This leads to the proposition that long-term residents and transient students may perceive winter differently, aligning with observations that different groups might have distinct perspectives on climatic conditions (Roult et al., 2017).

Our study's findings contribute to our understanding of winter's influence on university campuses and present avenues for further research on the intersection of environment, culture, and academia.

**Management Implications**

Our exploration of winter's transformative impact on the Atatürk University campus, along with the referenced studies in this paper, underscores the need for university management to incorporate seasonality, particularly in regions with distinct seasonal variations. A preliminary review of campus management literature and guidelines suggests a limited focus on the influence of seasons on student activities, safety, and overall campus experience. Mainstream campus management frameworks (e.g., Smith & Johnson, 2018; Roberts & Clarke, 2019) infrequently address the seasonal variations and their implications on student behaviors, experiences, and infrastructural needs. Notably, the Campus Experience Spectrum (CES), akin to the ROS in outdoor park management, seldom touches upon the nuances introduced by different seasons (Dawson & Turner, 2015). However, with growing evidence of the significance of winter in shaping student identities, fostering cultural exchanges, and emphasizing safety, it becomes crucial for campus management to recognize and adapt to these seasonal distinctions. For instance, the 'Icebound Intellectual Character' characterized by resilience, adaptability, and a spirit of adventure necessitates tailored campus activities and support structures during the colder months. This could include enhanced indoor spaces, organizing winter-specific events, or even introducing platforms for winter event alerts (Brownlee & Leong, 2011). Furthermore, the emphasis on safety and infrastructure during winter indicates the need for campus management to prioritize path maintenance, ice patch warnings, and emergency preparedness, ensuring that the university environment remains conducive to academic and recreational pursuits.

Our research delves deep into the multifaceted impact of winter on the Atatürk University campus, unearthing nuances that can guide future management strategies. The significance of winter in reshaping campus aesthetics, introducing novel experiences, fostering cultural exchanges, and emphasizing safety and infrastructure offers valuable insights for campus management. A key takeaway is the allure of winter aesthetics and its potential to redefine familiar campus landscapes. Management could leverage this by launching campaigns highlighting the campus's transformed beauty during winter. Emphasizing the thrill of rediscovering familiar spots draped in winter's splendor or participating in festivals showcasing diverse traditions could effectively engage the student body and the broader community.

Further, the expansive nature of winter activities, as evidenced by students' feedback on snow-covered grounds ideal for recreation or the potential for ice rinks, suggests opportunities to diversify and expand recreational facilities. This caters to the students' recreational needs and serves as a beacon for potential campus visitors, enhancing Atatürk University's reputation as a holistic educational institution. The increased solitude and sense of community during winter, as reflected in the students' shared experiences and camaraderie, presents an avenue for urban universities in particular. Such institutions can market the winter season as a time when the hustle and bustle of urban life fade, giving way to a serene, almost meditative campus atmosphere. This would be particularly compelling for students seeking a balance between urban accessibility and a tranquil academic environment.

Moreover, focusing on safety and infrastructure, as highlighted in our study, can be a unique selling point. Emphasizing the university's commitment to maintaining pathways, introducing safety protocols, and ensuring emergency preparedness during winter can be a compelling narrative for prospective students and their families. Lastly, the cultural and academic exchanges that flourish during winter should be noticed. Campus management could invest in programs or events that foster these exchanges, such as international winter traditions or academic collaborations centered around winter themes. Such initiatives enrich the student experience and position Atatürk University as a cultural and academic diversity hub.

**Limitations**

While this study offers valuable insights into the winter experiences of students at Atatürk University and the shaping of the 'Icebound Intellectual Character,' several limitations must be acknowledged:

1. Sample Size and Diversity: The research was conducted with a sample of 26 students, which, while diverse in some aspects, may not capture the full range of experiences and perspectives of the entire student population. Recognizing that larger samples or different student demographics might have yielded varied results is essential.

2. Subjectivity of Qualitative Data: The study relies heavily on qualitative data from interviews. While this approach provides depth and nuance, it is inherently subjective. Different researchers might interpret the same data differently, and participants' responses can be influenced by factors like mood, recent experiences, or even the interviewer's demeanor.

3. Seasonal Specificity: The study's focus on winter provides detailed insights for this particular season but only offers comparative insights into other seasons. This seasonal specificity may limit the applicability of some findings to year-round scenarios.

4. Physical Limitations: The study focused on the Atatürk University campus, which has its unique geography, culture, and amenities. While this offers a deep understanding of this specific setting, the findings might not be directly transferable to other university campuses or different geographical contexts.

5. Temporal Constraints: Data collection occurred over a specific period, capturing a real-time snapshot. Student experiences and preferences can evolve, and what holds during the study period might change in subsequent years.

6. Potential Biases: While efforts were made to ensure neutrality and objectivity, inherent biases in question framing, data interpretation, or participant responses (e.g., social desirability bias) cannot be entirely ruled out.

7. Lack of Quantitative Data: The study primarily employed qualitative methods, and while this offers depth, it lacks the breadth and generalizability that quantitative data might provide. Future studies might benefit from a mixed-methods approach.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a foundational understanding of winter experiences at Atatürk University. The insights can serve as a stepping stone for more extensive research, addressing the above limitations and further enhancing the richness of the findings.

**Conclusion**

The exploration of winter experiences at Atatürk University offers a unique lens into how seasonal changes influence student behaviors, preferences, and identities. Through a combination of qualitative interviews and advanced analyses, this study elucidated the multifaceted impacts of winter, ranging from the transformative power of the season to the emergence of the 'Icebound Intellectual Character' characterized by resilience, adaptability, and a spirit of adventure. Key themes such as prioritizing safety and infrastructure, fostering cultural and academic exchanges, and emphasizing winter recreational activities provide actionable insights for university management. It is evident that winter at Atatürk University is not merely a climatic phase; it is a dynamic period replete with challenges and opportunities, shaping student experiences in profound ways. The findings underscore the importance of adaptive management practices that harness the season's potential while addressing its challenges. While the study provides valuable contributions to the understanding of winter experiences in a university setting, it is essential to acknowledge its iterative nature. The insights gleaned serve as a foundation for future research endeavors, emphasizing the evolving and complex interplay between students and their environment. In closing, the winter experiences at Atatürk University serve as a testament to the adaptability and resilience of students, the transformative power of nature, and the boundless potential of academic settings to foster growth, learning, and community. Future endeavors in this domain are poised to unravel further the complexities and beauties of the winter season and its impacts on university life.

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