

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis explores the group of first-generation doctoral students and their social support throughout their studies. The aim of the thesis was to understand the experiences of first-generation students in doctoral programs, their perception of social support during their studies, the potential transformation of their close relationships due to their academic pursuits, and to describe their sense of belonging to their institution and social groups. The theoretical part focuses on the foundations of social support, social identity, and belonging with respect to first-generation students, doctoral students in general, and specifically first-generation doctoral students. The research sample consisted of 6 first-generation doctoral students, studying full-time in humanities and social sciences programs. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings indicate that respondents were already goal-oriented individuals during their undergraduate studies, who managed to utilize other sources of support when family support for their studies was lacking. They primarily drew emotional support from their families. Some did not notice significant changes in family relationships, while others faced misunderstandings due to their studies, affecting their sense of belonging and communication with their family. They did not feel a strong sense of belonging to their institution due to the independent nature of doctoral work but sought it through relationships with fellow doctoral students, where shared identity was key to creating supportive relationships. A quality relationship with the supervisor was essential for respondents' satisfaction, while insufficient interest from the supervisor led to doubts and stress.

KEYWORDS

first generation students, doctoral students, students, social support, belonging