

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN EKITI STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was carried-out to investigate social adjustment and academic performance among first-year university students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design was employed in this study. The research population for this study were male and female first-year students from two randomly selected universities in Ekiti State. Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) was used to evaluate students' social adjustment to university and the academic performance questionnaire was used to measure academic performance. Responses in the JISC online tool were downloaded and the data were analysed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS® statistics version 24). Moreover, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyse the relationship between academic performance and social adjustment at $P= 0.05$ level of significance. Findings of this study revealed that 41% of the respondents were male students, a moderate negative significant correlation between the social adjustment and academic performance ($r = -0.36$, $n = 281$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover, the result revealed that there was no significant relationship between the social adjustment of first-year university students and their academic performance in Ekiti state. A thorough orientation and transitioning programme are proposed to enhance prompt social adjustment as well as positive academic performance among first-year university students in Ekiti State and beyond.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Academic Performance, Gender, University Students, First Year

Introduction

The transition of first-year university students from secondary school to a tertiary degree of education is often regarded as the most challenging phase of life for adolescents. It is challenging because these young adults are expected to take up new roles and responsibilities alongside their career development for the first time after leaving high school (Hassel, 2018; Sujana et al., 2021).

To achieve desired academic goals, first-year students need a greater level of social adjustment to their unfamiliar environment at the beginning of their studies compared with older students in the university (Kyalo & Chumba, 2011). With the

existence of new responsibilities, however, first year students of tertiary institutions sometimes become doubtful of their ability to adapt to their current academic world or build good relationships, which in return wary them and affect their academic performance (Abdullah & Elias, 2009).

It has been observed that most of the challenges of university students especially in their first year revolve around social adjustment, and the extent of a student's social adjustment in areas such as feeling at home in an unfamiliar environment and the ability to cope with making quality contact with friends, relatives and teachers goes a long way in influencing his attitudes, likes,

character, disposition, decision making, beliefs, purchases, curiosity, career, and the academic performance. In the same vein, a first-year university student who can socially adapt to the new university environment is said to be capable of adjusting academically, hence having good academic performance (Eze, 2015; Alharti, 2020).

Aside from being separated from their families and the comforts of their homes, first-year students need to adapt to the unfamiliar situation by making fresh social connections, managing their time independently and efficiently, balancing social and academic lives, managing accommodation challenges, and maximising their limited financial resources and lots more. Hence, for first-year students to be successful in academics, there ought to be a substantial change from the usual secondary school attributes to a progressive university features. According to Morton et al. (2014), the transitioning of first-year students from old life to a new university life typify their social adjustment.

The concept of academic performance has been known among scholars as a reflection of the outcome of education and a centre around which the totality of a learner's education revolves (Lee & Shute, 2010; Rono, 2013; Kumar et al., 2021). This is one of the primary reasons for the growing interest in student academic performance among students, parents, institutions of learning, researchers, and policymakers (Lamas, 2015, Kumar et al., 2021). Narad & Adbullah (2016) posited that academic performance and success of students in any academic institution are related to academic success or failure of the institution. Better academic

performance facilitates good career and future economic security for students, and the economic and social development of a country is attributable to the quality of the workforce it produces (Narad & Adbullah 2016; Singh et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2021).

There is a wide array of definitions of academic performance with an emphasis on different themes. While there are authors who emphasized academic performance as course completion and skill acquisition, others defined it from the perspective of the student's employability and career progression. A brief definition is presented here since the concept of academic performance will be explored further in the literature review section of this dissertation. According to Narad & Abdullah (2016), academic performance is defined as knowledge acquired which is evaluated by a teacher or academic goals set by the student and teachers, to be achieved over a defined period.

There has been a consistent increase in the number of empirical studies on factors that numerous factors that contribute to students' learning outcomes in schools, colleges, and universities. Most of these previous studies revealed that there are many social factors that often prevent first-year students' from learning ((Ali et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2016; Eze, 2015) and these factors play significant role in social maladjustment of first-year university students most importantly toward their academic achievement. Social adjustment as an important variable toward first-year University students' academic performance is said to have a link with several constructs like peer approval, family milieu and school attachment.

With the rapidly growing competition in the field of education, governments at both national and international levels have continued to promote global "Education for All" (EFA). It has therefore become important that proper measures should be put in place by all institutions to ensure "Education for All" as well as promote factors to enhance quality education and performance in Ekiti state. Hence, students' adaptation to university is considered a significant phase and a determinant of student's academic outcomes

Objectives of the study

Specifically, this study determined the:

- I. Level of social adjustment of first-year university students in Ekiti State.
- II. Level of academic performance of first-year university students in Ekiti State.
- III. Relationship between social adjustment and academic performance of first-year university students in Ekiti State.
- IV. Gender difference in social adjustments of first-year university students in Ekiti State.
- V. Gender difference in academic performance of first-year university students in Ekiti State.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of social adjustment and of first-year university students in Ekiti State?
2. What is the level of academic performance of first-year university students in Ekiti State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between social adjustment and academic performance of first year university students in Ekiti State
2. There is no significant gender difference in social adjustment of first year university students in Ekiti State
3. There is no significant gender difference in academic performance of first year university students in Ekiti State

Methodology

A descriptive research design was used in this study. This design was adopted to describe the existing situation pertaining to the relationship between social adjustment and academic performance of first year students in Tertiary institutions in Ekiti State without any form of data manipulation. The participants for the study consisted of 283 first-year, full-time undergraduate students (18-30 years) selected through purposive sampling technique from one Federal Government-owned University and a State government-owned University located in Ekiti State. Respondents were recruited through the online social learning platforms used for remote learning during the nationwide university strike at both Universities. The targeted platform was WhatsApp groups for general courses taken by a wide range of first-year students. A self-structured and validated questionnaire consisting of three sections was the instrument for data collection in this study.

Section A of the questionnaire consists of items to elicit information

on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B of the questionnaire consists of 44 items to assess the respondents' social adjustment. Correct responses were scored "1" while incorrect responses were scored "0". Hence, knowledge items had a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 21. For the purpose of grading the knowledge of the respondents into levels, the scores of each respondent on the knowledge items were summed up and graded. Respondents were then categorized into either having poor knowledge (that is, having scores between 0 and 10, constituting less than 50% of the total mark), or having fair knowledge (that is, having scores between 11 and 14 (constituting 50-69% of the total score), or having a good knowledge (that is, having scores of 15 and above constituting 70% and above of the total score on knowledge). Section C of the instrument consists of items to measure the academic performance of the respondents. The instrument has 8 items with a 5-point scoring scale of 'strongly agree (5), 'agree' (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The scale has an internal consistency of 0.89.

The participants were informed by the students' heads via social media platforms of the link to the JISC online survey where the questionnaire will be attached. Participants were informed and assured over and over that their participation is not mandatory, and that it is only the completed anonymous questionnaire that will be analysed for this study. Participants' information will be analysed anonymously and data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 16. The frequency and percentage distribution of independent and dependent variables were carried out using frequency counts and percentages Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), to determine relationship among variables at 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Approval

This study was approved by the Research and Ethics Review Committee of the two tertiary institutions involved in this study. In addition, all ethical guidelines of the University of Hull were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=283)

S/N	Demographic Variable	Frequency	%
1	Gender		
	Male	116	42.0

		Female	164	58.0
		Not Specified	3	1.0
2	Attendance at any university prior to enrolling at your current university	No	249	88.0
		Yes	34	12.0
3	Living Arrangement on Campus	off Campus	243	86.0
		on Campus	40	14.0
4	Living Status on Campus	Alone	112	39.6
		With Room mate	155	54.7
		With Family	16	5.7

Table 1 shows that more female respondents (58%) participated in the study. Also, most of the respondents (88%) have not attended any university prior to enrolling at the current university. Most of the students stayed off-

campus (86%) and most of the students of the students (54.7%) lived with their roommates.

Research Question 1: What is the level of social adjustment of first-year university students in Ekiti State?

Table 2: Levels of students' Social Adjustment

Categories	Frequency	%
Low Adjustment	95	33.6
Moderate Adjustment	92	32.5
High Adjustment	94	33.2
Not Specified	2	0.7
Total	283	100.0

Table 2 shows that the level of social adjustment of first year university students in Ekiti State is moderate.

Research Question 2: What is the level of academic performance of first-year university students in Ekiti State?

Table 3: Levels of students' academic performance

Categories	Frequency	%
Low performance	107	38.8
Average performance	73	32.7
High Performance	101	35.7
Not Specified	2	0.7
Total	283	100.0

Table 3 shows that the level of academic performance of first year university students in Ekiti State is moderate.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between social adjustment and academic performance of first year university students in Ekiti State

Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Social Adjustment and Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	P-value
Social adjustment	281	61.58	23.30	-.359	0.001
Academic performance	281	34.39	3.98		

The relationship between students' academic performance and students' social adjustment was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The result (Table 4) revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between Academic Performance and Social adjustment of first-year university students of Ekiti State ($r = -0.36$, $n = 281$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, the stated null hypothesis was rejected. The result also revealed that there

was a moderate, negative correlation between the two variables ($r = -0.36$, $n = 281$, $p < 0.05$). The result revealed that low social adjustment of the students has the tendency of causing low academic performance among the students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant gender difference in the social adjustment of first year university students in Ekiti State.

Table 5: t-test analysis of gender difference in social adjustment of first year university students

Variable		N	Mean	SD	t	P-value
Social adjustment	Male	118	59.71	22.44	-1.081	0.281
	Female	165	62.76	23.89		

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the social adjustment for first year male and female students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The result revealed that there no is statistically significant gender difference in the social adjustment of first year students. However, female students adjusted better ($M = 62.76$, $SD = 23.89$) than their male counterparts ($M = 59.71$, $SD = 22.44$); $t(278) = -1.09$, $p > 0.05$, but the difference was not statistically significant. It can therefore be concluded that there is no difference in the social adjustment of male and female students. Hence hypothesis 2 is not rejected

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of first year university students in Ekiti State

Table 6: t-test analysis of gender difference in academic performance of first year university students

Variable		N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Academic performance	Male	118	34.44	4.36	.185	0.853
	Female	165	34.35	3.72		

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the academic performance for male and female 100 level students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The result revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the academic performance of male students ($M = 34.44$, $SD = 4.36$) and female students ($M = 34.35$, $SD = 3.72$); $t(281) = 0.18$, $p > 0.05$. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no difference in the academic performance of male and female students. Therefore hypothesis 3 is not rejected.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to assess the level of social adjustment and academic performance of first year students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The findings of this study revealed that the level of social adjustment among first year undergraduate students in Ekiti State is moderate and that about only 35% of the students have high academic performance. This calls for concern and it is in contrast with the finding of Malik et al. (2013) and Abdulhakeem (2021) who reported a moderate level of academic performance among their respondents. It needs to be noted that, although majority of the first year

student stated that they desired good academic performance, as indicated in the descriptive analysis of components of academic performance used in this study, only some of them could go extra mile to pay the necessary price required to achieve high academic performance. For example, the descriptive analysis of the items used to assess academic performance indicates that less than 50% of the first year university students pay attention and listen at every discussion, and just 32.7% of them participated actively in discussions, which are the essential attributes for good academic performance.

The finding of this study corroborates the saying that if wishes were horses, then beggars too would have a ride. This is an indication that students need to go beyond mere desiring to have good academic performance and put more effort in their academic work in order to attain excellent academic performance. Findings relating to social adjustment revealed that the level of social adjustment among first year university students was also moderate. Only 33.5% of the students have high social adjustment. This is similar to the findings of Sultana-Muchindu (2016), Ali et al (2018) and Alipio (2020) who also reported moderate level of social

adjustment among the university students that were used for their study. The reason for this moderate level of social adjustment may probably be because the students are just leaving home for a new environment with new principles and practice for the first time. Going through the descriptive analysis of the demographic attributes of the respondents, it was revealed that majority (88%) of the students have not attended any university prior to enrolling at this current university. This thus corroborate the fact that majority of the students are just leaving the custody of their family and friends for the first time thus may need some time to effectively adjust to their new environment. The moderate level of social adjustment reported in this study, may be another reason for the low academic performance reported among the respondents. Being able to adjust well to the social environment of the school will go a long way to help first year university students to cope well with the challenges within the academic environment and this is likely to influence their academic performance well.

The findings of this study on the relationship between social adjustment and academic performance yielded a significant correlation between the two variables. This is somewhat similar to the findings of Suttana-Muchindu (2016) and Sujana, Jaya and Fiftinova (2021). However, while the findings of Suttana-Muchindu and that of Sujana et al showed positive correlation, the correlation between social adjustment and academic performance observed in this study was negative or inverse which is an indication that the higher the social adjustment, the lower the academic performance of first year university students.

The negative correlation observed between social adjustment and academic performance in this study, look somehow confusing especially because it is expected that when one adjusts well to an environment, then it is likely one is able to navigate well and succeed in that environment. However, it needs to be pointed out that adjusting well to the social environment of a school may not necessarily result in a good level of academic adjustment among university students. Social adjustment and academic adjustment are two separate constructs that affect academic performance of students differently.

Another thing that comes to mind when considering the reason behind the negative correlation between social adjustment and academic performance, observed in this study, is probably because the social adjustment reported by the university students tended towards the social direction more than the academic direction. For example, many of these university students reported having several close social ties, getting involved in social activities on campus and having enough social skills to get on in the university communities and these type of adjustments may not likely favour good academic performance of the students. Although it is good to have social skills and be involved in social activities, if care is not taken, these could take more of the attention of a freshman who is just entering the university system for the first time and this may be detrimental to the academic achievement of such students

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the level of social adjustment of first year tertiary institutions in Ekiti State was moderate, while majority of the students have

between low and moderate the level of academic performance

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Universities should endeavour to organise orientation and transitioning programmes for the first-year students.

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