



Parental Socioeconomic Status and Sex as Correlates of First Year Students Adjustment to University Life in University of Benin, Benin City

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Abstract

Adjustment, which is part of every transitional stage in individuals' lives, could determine how well an individual will deal with changes that occur as he/she moves from one transitional stage to another. As the growing child transits through the various educational stages he may encounter some challenges that can lead to maladjustment. This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between parental socioeconomic status, sex and first year students' adjustment to university life in university of Benin, Benin City. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study is correlational survey. The population of the study comprises all one hundred level students in University of Benin. A sample of 400 students was randomly selected for the study. Student Adjustment to University Life Questionnaire (SAULQ) by Baker & Siryk, (1989) was used for data collection. A reliability coefficient of 0.99 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. The Spearman's rho statistics was employed to analyse the data collected. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between parental socioeconomic status and first year students' adjustment to University; there is no significant relationship between sex and first year students' adjustment to University. Based on the findings, recommendations were made which include; students should be encouraged to visit and utilise the Students' Guidance and Counselling Centre maximally where trained counsellors can assist them in coping and adjusting to university life.

Keywords: Adjustment, Parents Socioeconomic Status, Sex, University Students

Introduction

Adjustment as part of every transitional stage in individuals' lives, could determine how well an individual will deal with changes that occur from one transitional stage to another. The ability to adapt is therefore important to the growing child who is expected to transit through the various educational stages. Such transitional stages begin from the primary to secondary and to tertiary institutions. Each of the stages comprises different academic, social and extracurricular activities which the person is expected to participate in and as the person progresses, the more advanced the activities are. Some could easily adapt to the changes and challenges that they encounter as they move from one stage to another, while others could find it difficult to progress to the next stage.

It is on the above premise that Agbakwuru and Agbakwuru (2012) submitted that adjustment to schooling is the process of bringing an individual's behaviours in conformity with the norms of the school setting. It is a continuous process that is geared towards the adaptation of the individual to school life and culture. Richard (in Adeyemo, 2005) sees adjustment as the student's ability to cope, to manage their emotions and anatomy to behave in socially appropriate and responsible way to meet up school challenges and responsibilities. This means that adjustment involves physiological and emotional ability to cope with the social demands of the environment.

At the University level, students' performance, psychosocial outcomes and productivity could be determined by their ability to adjust to University life in the first year. During the first year, successful students come to understand what is expected of them, develop strong habits of learning, and build connections with University staff and peers. This fosters involvement and promotes cognitive and personal development, as well as the foundation for future occupational success (Astin, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Conversely, first year students who do not successfully do these things and build a strong foundation are likely to drop out of school, engage in maladaptive and behavioural problems such as cultism, substance abuse, truancy among others. This could be because at this level, daily schedule is more structured, with more formal rules. Students are may be separated from family and friends temporarily for the first time and faced with large groups of people of different sex, languages, culture, social, economic background and size especially during lecture time. They are confronted with the challenges of making new friends. The student is confronted with a totally new environment as compared to home. According to Fabian (2000) and Dockett, Perry and Tracey (1997), successful adjustment to university life largely depends on past experiences at home and on children skills and knowledge from secondary schools.

Pancer, Hunsgerger, Pratt and Alisat (2000) in their investigation of cognitive complexity of expectations and adjustment to University in the first year using two hundred and twenty six (226) students found that; Most First year students experience difficulties in adjusting to matters such as being away from home, large classes, socialization, increased workload, increased work difficulty, fund management and performances below their expectations. Consequently, many students experience considerable difficulty in adjusting to life at University. According to Dill and Henley (2009), significant number of First-Year students reported moderate to high level of loneliness and home sickness and many reported difficulties keeping up with academic work. These stresses can lead to serious consequences. A significant number of students experience health problems and



emotional problems during the first weeks and months at University. In addition, as many as 30% to 40% of first-year students will drop out of University without completing their degrees as a result of the difficulties they experience in adjusting to university life (Rickinson & Rutherford, 2000).

Some of the factors which could influence the students adjustment are parental socioeconomic, sex, among others. Okioga (2013) defined socioeconomic status (SES) as the economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or families economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. Also, Krieger, Williams and Moss (in Selma & Janke, 2017) posited that the term socioeconomic is used to denote various objective indicators of economic capital such as one's income, education and occupation. Typically, socioeconomic status is a type of occupation individuals hold. Often these types of indices are used as descriptive and/or control variables in psychological research as opposed to variables of primary concern (Fouad & Brown, 2001). A person's SES is typically referred to as one of the following, low-SES or working-class, middle-SES or middle-class, high-SES or upper-class. According to Bradley and Corwyn (2002), individuals with low SES ratings tend to have low status occupations, such as service industry jobs; income at or below the poverty level; and low levels of formal education. These individuals have limited access to the kinds of financial, educational, and social resources that could promote their own health and well-being and that of their families. Individuals with high SES ratings are likely to work in prestigious positions, such as in medicine or law; have higher salaries; and have more advanced education. These individuals have greater access to resources that can contribute to their success and to the perpetuation of similar benefits for their families.

Low SES has been associated with maladaptive behaviours. Children and adolescents growing up in low-SES household exhibit more aggressive and delinquent behaviour, and both low SES children and adults have a higher likelihood of suffering from psychological disorders, such as depression (King 2005). Previous articles by Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2001); Government Accountability Office (2003); King (2005) have revealed that several factors associated with lower levels of adjustment to University are also related to individuals' low SES background. For example, increased experiences of stress, decreased social resources, decreased academic resources, lower likelihood of parents with University education, and increased levels of depressive symptoms have all been associated with students from low SES background as well as lower levels of adaptation to University. In other words, students from low SES backgrounds may be at higher risk for maladjustment to University because of their exposure to factors generally related to lower adjustment to University.

Backhaus (2010) carried out a study exploring the relationships among students' socioeconomic background, experiences of classism and adjustment to college. Study participants were first year college students from Midwestern University, Nebraska. The data was analysed using multiple SES variables as predictors in exploratory regression modelling with multiple criterion variables related to college adjustment, and experiences of classism. Correlational analyses were used to examine the relationship between experiences of classism and adjustment to college. The results of the study indicated that students from low-SES backgrounds were less well-adjusted academically and personal-emotionally, as well as having less attachment to their university than their peers from higher-SES backgrounds. However, no relationship was found between SES and overall adjustment

to college. Additionally, the results indicated that students from low-SES backgrounds were more likely to report experiencing classism (institutional, citational, and interpersonal via discounting) than their peers from higher-SES backgrounds.

In a study carried out by Nidhi and Kermane (2015) on adjustment problems of college students in relation to socio-economic status, gender and academic achievement, using the Adjustment Inventory for College Students (AICS). The sample consists 80 University students, 40 male and 40 females from Dehradun district of Uttarakhand, who responded to AICS. t-test and product moment correlation of coefficient statistics were used to test the relationship and significance of difference between the variables. The researchers predicted that, students having low socioeconomic status have more adjustment problems than that of high socioeconomic college students

In addition, the ability of a student to adapt to the vigorous and challenging life in the University could also be influenced by sex; male or female, because the genetic makeup of the male students is not the same as that of the female students. Such genetic makeup could determine the ease at which first year students are likely to adjust to university life in terms of finance. According to Lama (2010), there is a great tendency for female students to experience adjustment problems more than males. Whereas Roy, Ekka and Ara (2011) observed that female students were better adjusted than male students. Al-Khatib, Awamleh, and Somawi, (2012), carried out a study on male and female students in Albalqa Applied Technical University. The researchers administered the Adjustment to College Scale (ACS) on a random sample which consists of (334) students. The findings showed that there were no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) on the scale of adjustment to college attributed to college, gender, study level, and the interactions between them. A study by Enochs and Renk (2006) suggests that males adjust faster than females. In addition, the study revealed that females rely on social support more than their male counterparts to adjust to the university life. Very few studies have been carried in investigating sex influences on school students' adjustment. Hence the findings of this study will help to fill the gap.

Bernier and Whipple (2005), posit that while some first year University students are able to deal with transitional challenges and adjust to University life successfully, some find it difficult adjusting because of the complexity of the experiences and the steps to handle them are at times perceived to be difficult to them. Also, adjustment difficulties among first year students need serious attention as they could lead to students' stress, inability to get good scores and failure to complete their studies. Based on the above, the researchers therefore investigated Parental Socioeconomic Status and Sex as Correlates of First Year Students Adjustment to University Life.

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and first year university students' adjustment to university life

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between sex and first year university students' adjustment to university life.



Method

Correlational survey design was adopted for the study. Two independent variables were involved in the study; parental socio-economic status in three levels (low, average and high); Sex in two levels (male and female) and one dependent variable; University adjustment. The population consists eleven thousand, one hundred and forty-six (11146) one hundred level students from all the faculties in the University of Benin of the school 2017/2018 session. A sample of four hundred subjects were selected using the multi stage sampling procedures since the target population is vast.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the study was Student Adjustment to University Life Questionnaire (SAULQ); originally developed by Baker and Siryk, (1989) and was adapted and modified by the researchers to suit the present study. It can be used to measure students' general adjustment to university setting. The instrument is a 67-item, self-reported appraisal of adaptation to university. The scale can be administered directly to individuals or to groups. Participants are to respond to each of the 67 items using a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (applies very closely to me) to 9 (does not apply to me at all). Item reduction was carried out on the initial 67 self-report items to 41 items on the basis of relevance to the present study. It is also structured on a modified Likert scale as follows: "Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1)" and contains two sub-scales. Section A contains 11 items meant to illicit responses on general information of respondents (bio-data) and variables on parental socioeconomic status. Section B contains 30 items that identify four adjustment process and their relative subscales made up of statement associated with behavioural traits or characteristics of adjustment.

The validity of the research instrument was established by the three experts in the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology. Their constructive criticism was used to improve and prepare the final copy of the instrument. The instrument reliability was determined using a sample of 30 University students outside population under study. The data collected was analysed using the Cronbach Alpha (α) statistical formula. A reliability coefficient of 0.993 was obtained. This shows that the instrument is reliable. The reliability is high because the instrument is a standardised instrument that has been improved on overtime. Initial reliability score by Baker et al (1989) ranges from 0.92 to 0.95.

The researchers visited the University and administered the questionnaires to the sample subjects in the various departments with the help of research assistants. This was done with prior permission from the various lecturers present in the lecture theatres. The researchers explained the purpose of the research exercise and distributed copies of the questionnaire to the students. This enabled the subjects to willingly and sincerely fill the questionnaires. Copies of the questionnaire were collected immediately the subjects finished responding to them.

Method of Data Analysis

The obtained data were analysed using Spearman's rho correlational statistical tool to test null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. If the P-value is less than the level of significance value of 0.05, the hypotheses will be rejected.

Result and Discussion

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and first year university students' adjustment to university life

Table 1: Spearman's rho correlation of parents' socioeconomic status and first year students' adjustment to university life

Variables	N	R	Sig
Parents Socioeconomic status	400	0.70	0.114
Adjustment			

$P > 0.05$

Table 1 shows a calculated value of 0.70 and a p value of .114, testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p value is greater than the alpha level, so, the null hypotheses which states that "there is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and first year students' adjustment to university life" is retained. Consequently, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and first year students' adjustment to university life.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between sex and first year university students' adjustment to university life

Table 2: Spearman's rho correlation of sex and first year students' adjustment to university life

Variables	N	R	Sig
Sex	400	0.16	.747
Adjustment			

$P > 0.05$

Table 2 shows a calculate value of 0.16 and a p value of .747, testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p value is greater than the alpha level, so, the null hypotheses which states that "there is no significant relationship between sex of first year students' and their adjustment to university life" is retained. Consequently, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between sex and first year students' adjustment to university life.



Discussion of Finding

The result obtained in this study was discussed based on the formulated hypotheses. The finding of hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant relationship in first year students' adjustment to University life and parental socioeconomic status. This finding agrees with the study of Backhaus (2010) who found no relationship between parents socioeconomic and overall adjustment to college among first year students. However, this finding is at variance with the finding of the study carried out by Nidhi and Kermene (2015) which they asserted that, students having low socioeconomic status have more adjustment problems than that of high socioeconomic college students hence, parents socioeconomic status will determine how well first year students will be able to adjust to University life. The outcome of this finding can be attributed to students emerging from homes with similar socioeconomic status, therefore, they are likely to experience similar problems with adjustment to University life irrespective of parents' socioeconomic status.

The finding of hypothesis two reveals that there is no significant relationship between sex and first year University students' adjustment to university life. This finding agrees with Al-Khatib, Awamleh, and Somawi, (2012) who posited that there were no significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) on the scale of adjustment to college attributed to gender. Also, the study corroborates with Mahmondi (2010), who posited that gender has no differential influence on adjustment in health, emotional and social area among University students. Therefore, irrespective of their sexes, first year students need to improve their relationships with their parents and families to adjust well to university life.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between parental socioeconomic status, sex and first year students' adjustment to university life. The findings of this study revealed that first year students' adjustment to university life has no significant relationship with parental socioeconomic status and sex. In this respect, it can be deduced that first-year students are likely to encounter adjustment challenges to university life irrespective of parental socioeconomic status and sex.

Recommendations

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

1. New students should be exposed to strategies that would help them to adjust to University life.
2. Students should be encouraged to utilise the Students' Guidance and Counselling Centre maximally by visiting the trained counsellors to assist them in coping and adjusting to University life.
3. Students should be given opportunities to express their own ideas and discuss their problems with their parents and school authorities. It develops self-confidence and mental satisfaction among the students.

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