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Adjustment Challenges of First Year Students of Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study focused on the academic and social adjustment challenges of first year undergraduate students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. Descriptive survey research design was used, and a population of 3,633, with a sample size of 346 subjects, was studied. Simple random technique was employed. A researcher designed questionnaire titled 'Students' Adjustment Challenges' was used for data collection. Face validity was ensured through inspection by three experts in the Department of Counselling Psychology, IBB University Lapai. A reliability measure of 0.82 was found through a test retest method. The two administrations of the test were done with two weeks interval. All the items that derive from the factor analysis of academic and social adjustment challenges of the subjects showed affirmation of the problems above the threshold level of confirmation of the challenge. The challenges are evident from the analysis of data and must have been adversely affecting the quality of learning of the subjects. It was recommended that student support services, such as counselling and sports, should be put in place (in practical terms) to solve the problem of adjustment of the subjects.

Keywords: Adjustment, challenges, undergraduate, first year and students

1. Introduction

Adjustment describes one's resourcefulness to cope with challenges that characterizes particular stages of life. It implies one's readiness to live up to expectation. It is defined as coping with problems of normal everyday life (Halonen & Cantrock, 1997; Weiten, Dun & Yost Hammer, 2015 and Moritsugu, Vera, Jacobs & Kennedy, 2017). The transition from secondary school to the University represents a supposedly normal activity within the range of lifetime events. Bernier, Larose and Whippie (2005) said that transition from secondary school to University is a difficult undertaking. While this change involves moving from one school setting to another, the differences in physical site, characteristics, time schedules, expectations and behaviour requirement (self-monitoring, appropriate pacing, focus, verbal and quantitative fluency, attention to deadlines) can be challenging (Moritsugu, Vera, Jacobs & Kennedy, 2017). Noor and Hairul (2005) described first year students as those passing through transitional period. He added that they are usually faced with all kinds of adjustment challenges which include physical, social, academic and emotional adjustment challenges. Success or failure to adjustment tasks relates significantly to a variety of factors including skills (interpersonal, self-regulatory, task completion, study skills and habit, social collaboration), motivation (vocational interests), and resources (general knowledge, technology-related knowledge, access to information helpful to career and educational decisions) (American Institute for Research, 2013 and Camara, O'Connor, Mattern & Hansen, 2015). Ordinarily pre-university education (i.e. basic education and senior secondary school learning) are designed to prepare young people to successfully adjust to challenges associated with under-graduate studies. An average Nigerian Senior Secondary School finisher looks forward to getting admission to University. Once the admission is successful, comes challenges that tend to reveal deficits in the developmental task rating of the students. For most of the students, this may be the first time they will be living on their own without the close supervision of parents and teachers who usually serve as house masters, class masters and/or godfathers. This may pose some specific challenges in terms of keeping to time/schedules (punctuality), choice of friends, purchases and budgeting, leisure, and study habit. Generally speaking, majority of the students joining the university are usually confronted with some sort of fear and anxiety coupled with expectation that may not be met easily. One of such examples is the challenge of hostel accommodation.

A study of Erikson's psycho-social development of University students conducted with two different groups (starting in the Mid-1960s and mid-1970s) and followed for 30/30+ years, found changes in the different psycho-social issues as the group grew older (Whitbourne, Sneed & Sayer, 2009). They found that industry (learning how to accomplish work tasks) is usually associated with elementary school years. Yet industry was found to be an issue at age 17 and

continued to grow as an issue until people's late 40s. Intimacy (the establishment of close relationship) is an issue that is typically focused on those in their late teens usually accelerated through their 20s. But intimacy progressed from age 17 into the late thirties and leveled off there. Those, who were lower on intimacy in their teens, usually accelerated through their 20s and caught up with the others by their 30s. The point that is being made here is that even when it is popularly held that the tasks in Erikson's psycho-social stages are age-specific, the issues do not go away within the period ascribed but develop over time in ways that correspond to social pressures.

Whippie (2005) posits that transition from secondary school to University is a difficult undertaking. Idowu (1998) said that first year undergraduate experience is usually characterized by stress and anxiety because of its transitional nature, that is, from post-primary schools (where instructional procedures are largely learner centered and teacher/learner ratio is of manageable size) to the University where students are considered mature and assumed to be capable of adjusting to dominant use of lecture method of teaching. Suradi (1984) & Fairbrother & Warn (2003) reported that adjustment challenges associated with undergraduate students include fear of failure, risk of cult-related activities, clash of lecture period, over-crowded lecture halls, rescheduling of lectures at the instance and/or convenience of lecturers and a few dominant/vocal students.

Wintre & Yaffe (2000) asserts that University experience may be frustrating and overwhelming which may lead to emotional disequilibrium and sometimes depression, and that if appropriate support services are not available, such negative feeling may place students at risk of remarkable academic underachievement which may lead to withdrawal from the programme. Raji and Rahamatula (2007) said that inability of students to adjust properly in the University can lead to low academic achievement, behavior problems, discordant educational aspirations and even drop out. This may also put the students to be at risk of examination malpractice, especially students with heightened success sense without enough aptitude and/or academic achievement status that provide enough foundation for the undergraduate studies. Wangere, Kimani & Mutweleli (2021) studied transitional challenges of first year undergraduates in Kenya Public Universities and found that the challenges relate to poor autonomy, peer relationship challenges and compatibility with other students in the hostel, lack of access to student support services, poor feeding and anxiety provoking testing culture. Chong, Elas, Uli & Mahyudd in (2010) found that students used emotion-focused and problem-solving strategies to manage stressful events.

From the foregoing it is obvious that undergraduate students, especially the first year category, are usually confronted with challenges bordering on peer relationships, time management, examination anxiety, financial challenges, fear of cult related activities, etc. Fortunately these challenges are within the purview of existing (Nigeria) National Universities Commission acknowledged students' support services especially the Counselling and the sports components. Unfortunately the implementation of the student support services leaves much to be desired. The study focuses on the prevalence of the adjustment challenges as it relates to first year undergraduate students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai.

2. Statement of the Problem

This study is about adjustment challenges of first year undergraduate students of IBBUL. The target group is first year students who are usually confronted with the challenges of settling down in a relatively novel environment, that is, the University. The study is designed to achieve the following ends:

- To identify academic adjustment challenges of first year students in the University
- To identify social adjustment challenges of the subjects of the study
- To provide basis for enhanced or functional student support services in the University
- Significance of the study

The study provides basis for good academic achievement or performance. Adjustment challenges are directly linked to our readiness to cope with University studentship. Consequently, the study will benefit first year undergraduate students whose condition is now better understood for proper guidance and remediation. Parents who understandably show concern about the transition of their children to university setting will be assured that there are structures and much information for the smooth transition of their wards. The University, especially the student support services providers, such the student affairs division, the counselling unit, hostel administrator will get better understanding of undergraduate students as they report for the first time.

3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the adjustment challenges of first year students of IBBUL, Niger State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include:

- To identify the major adjustment challenges of first year students of IBBUL
- To provide basis for functional Guidance and Counselling services in the University as a strategy to solve the problems

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were drawn to guide the study:

- What are the major academic adjustment challenges of first year students of IBBUL?
- What are the social adjustment challenges of first year students of IBBUL?

5. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design.

5.1. Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the 3,633 first year students of IBBUL of the 2019/2020 academic session. Simple random sampling technique was used for the selection process. A sample size of 346 first year students was drawn across the six Faculties of the University. Eleven (11) out of 26 departments were randomly picked to get the selected departments.

5.2. Instrumentation

A researcher designed questionnaire tagged - Students Adjustment Challenges Questionnaire (SACQ) was used. It is composed of two sections: section A focused on the demographic characteristics of the subjects, and section B dealt with the academic and social challenges of the students. A modified likert response pattern of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with the numerical values: SA – Strongly Agree = 4 marks, A – Agree = 3 marks, D – Disagree = 2 marks and SD – Strongly Disagree = 1 mark.

5.3. Validation of Research Instrument

In order to establish the face validity of the instrument, the instrument was evaluated by three experts in the Department of Counselling Psychology, IBBUL. The reliability of the instrument was achieved through test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered to 30 sampled first year students of Federal University of Technology, Minna twice at an interval of two weeks. The Pearson Product Moment correlation Coefficient was used to calculate reliability coefficient of 0.82.

5.4. Administration of the Instrument

The researcher employed the services of one research assistant. Three hundred and forty six copies of the questionnaire were produced and sent out to the selected samples in the eleven departments. The researcher and the research assistant explained to the subjects how to fill the questionnaire and also retrieved the filled copies of the questionnaire from the respondents. Two hundred and ninety two copies of the questionnaire out of three hundred and forty six copies sent out were filled and retrieved.

5.5. Method of Data Analysis

Rank order statistics was used to ascertain the challenges as well as determine their significance within the cluster of challenges of interest. *Decision Rule: 2.50 – 4.00 is Mean range for Agree and 1.00 – 2.49 is the Mean range for Disagree*

5.6. Data Analysis

5.6.1. Research Question 1

What are major academic adjustment challenges of first year students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai (IBBUL)?

S/N	Academic Challenges	Mean	StD	Rank order
1	Clash of lecture time table and emergency lecture fixing is a problem	3.36	0.828	1 st
2	Lecturers are usually too fast in dictating notes	3.36	0.839	2 nd
3	Lecture halls are usually overcrowded	3.30	0.873	3 rd
4	Means of transportation on campus is not efficient enough to facilitate punctuality	3.15	0.884	4 th
5	Some lecturers do not end their lectures on time leading to lateness to the next class	3.05	0.893	5 th
6	Test and assignments are usually stressful in view of their 30% weighting	2.91	0.915	6 th
7	Some lecturers do not start lectures on time leading to crowded lectures towards the end of semester	2.91	1.043	7 th
8	New students suffer from irregular sleeping patterns	2.82	0.981	8 th
	Sectional Mean	3.11		1 st

Table 1: Major Academic Adjustment Challenges of First Year Students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai

Table 1 shows rank order of academic challenges of first year undergraduate students of IBBUL. The analysis showed that clash of lecture time table and emergency lecture fixing ranked first among the challenges with a mean of 3.36. Inability to keep pace with lecture delivery speed particularly as it relates to note taking ranked second with a mean of 3.36. Other challenges include overcrowded lecture halls which ranked third with a mean of 3.30. Inefficient campus transport system ranked fourth with a mean of 3.15. The least ranked adjustment challenge is the irregular sleeping pattern (8th with a mean of 2.82) which may not be unconnected with widespread misuse of social media. The sectional mean of 3.11 with the least having a mean of 2.82 indicates the preponderance of academic adjustment challenge.

5.6.2. Research Question 2

What are the social adjustment challenges of first year students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai?

S/N	Social Adjustment	Mean	StD	Rank order
1	Newly admitted students usually feel that older students expect them to serve them e.g. running errands	3.36	0.839	1 st
2	Students feel scared when they have to relate with students of other religion and tribe	3.05	0.893	2 nd
3	Newly admitted students find it difficult to relate with students that drink or smoke in the hostel	3.05	0.895	3 rd
4	Newly admitted students usually feel inferior or inadequate when invited to parties	3.04	0.888	4 th
5	Newly admitted students are usually afraid of getting into bad peer relationship, so they try to keep to self	3.00	0.934	5 th
6	Newly admitted students are too aware of the time that is required to sustain friendship and so they, sometimes, refuse to get into quality relationship	2.80	0.939	6 th
	Sectional Mean	3.05		3 rd

Table 2: Student's Social Adjustment Challenges of First Year Students Of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai

The table above shows social adjustment challenges of first year undergraduate students of IBBUL. The result of analysis using rank order shows that the challenge of older students, that is, students at higher levels of the undergraduate programme often expect first year students to serve them or show some deference ranked first with a mean of 3.36. It should be noted that while this expectation may correlate with some cultural practices in Nigeria, there is no basis for such in the rules or regulations of Universities in Nigeria. The feeling of uneasiness or discomfort occasioned by relationship with students of other religion or tribe ranked second with a mean of 3.05, that is above the threshold numerical value for affirmation of the social adjustment challenge. The third in the rank order of the adjustment challenges is the difficulty in relating with students who drink alcohol or smoke cigarette with a mean of 3.05. The alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking is considered a misconduct in the University, yet you find students who indulge in the misconduct especially in the hostel. Other social challenges include dislike for parties or youthful social gatherings with a mean of 3.04 and ranked fourth. The fifth ranked challenge is the fear of getting into bad peer relationship with a mean of 3.00. The sectional mean of 3.05 indicates that social adjustment challenges are prevalent particularly when the least mean is 2.80 which is above the decision rule index for affirmation of the challenge.

6. Discussion

Challenges associated with new contexts such as the case of first year undergraduate students of IBBUL are part of the process of growth and development. Such challenges, if not addressed often, come with adverse consequences that may abbreviate or impede full realisation of the potentials of students. Such challenges if left unattended to, become more or less instances of missed opportunities particularly when solutions to the challenges are well-known in literature and from experiences of other climes. Academic adjustment challenges with a sectional mean of 3.11 showed that all the items listed for analysis ranked remarkably as challenges experienced by students. This agrees with the position of Suradi (1984) and Fair, Brother & Warn (2003) that adjustment challenges associated with undergraduate students include fear of failure, clash of lecture periods, overcrowded lecture halls and the like. Idowu (1999) also corroborated the existence of the challenges when he observed that learner/teacher ratio in many Nigeria public University context is high, and that the notion that University students are mature and should be able to take care of themselves coupled with preponderant use of lecture method usually compounds the problems of undergraduate students.

On social adjustment challenges, a sectional mean of 3.05 with the least mean of 2.80 suggests that all the items of social adjustment challenges were affirmed. Social adjustment challenges border on areas such as deference in lower/higher level student relationship pattern, religious and tribal affiliations/preference, and discomfort with students associated with in-take of social poisons such as alcohol and cigarette. This corroborates the findings of Wangere, Kimani and Mutweleli (2021) who studied the transitional challenges of first year students in Kenya public Universities and found that their challenges included peer relationship problems, and compatibility with other students in the hostel.

Generally speaking, schools are designed to promote learning and personality adjustment of learners, and this is achievable if we robustly acknowledge the fact of individual differences even in human response to academic and social challenges, and we adequately provide relevant services for students at appropriate time and context. For example, a need-based orientation at whole-University level, Faculty level and Departmental level will go a long way to enhance student's coping capacity.

7. Conclusion

Academic and social challenges are part of the process of student life particularly for those in the first year of academic settings such as the IBB University Lapai undergraduate programme. Such challenges include unstable lecture time table, overgeneralization of the entry behavior of students (students come from different school contexts showing different degrees of academic achievement readiness and deficits), and social skills status of different dimensions.

However, these challenges are supposed to be envisaged and be treated by some school personnel. Indeed, the school context should provide for the remediation of the challenges. Some of the measures, that can ameliorate the challenges, include the guidance oriented continuous assessment, ideal or recommended student/teacher ratio, and learner centered lecture delivery techniques. Above all, student support services such as a functional counselling center can go a long way to enhance the adjustment of the subjects.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations would help to ameliorate the challenges identified in the study:

- Counselling services such as appraisal, orientation and counselling should be responsibly implemented to take care of critical individual differences that may interfere with the adjustment process of the subjects
- Programmes and activities should be designed to enhance interaction between first year undergraduate students and students of other levels. Such activities may include peer counselling and mentoring and academically inclined group discussions
- The entire school environment should be made therapeutic, lecturers should be mobilized or trained to show unconditioned positive regard and be practical role models
- Hostel accommodation should be encouraged because it provides students better opportunity for responsible interaction under the watch of university personnel
- Behavior traceable to these challenges should not attract punishment that usually lead to expulsion or dismissal from the university, but should be seen as an opportunity for remediation and behavior modification. Public school policy environment that include education for all should be robust enough to handle cases of adjustment challenges
- The university should have a secured feedback mechanism for students who may be at risk of peer pressure or unguarded exposure to smoking and alcohol intake in the hostel or other contexts

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