

# INSTITUTIONAL REGULATIONS AND STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS: A CASE STUDY OF COVENANT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study discusses students' adjustment problems to institutional regulations and Covenant University is the case study. The main purpose of the study was to find out if students have problems adjusting to the university's code of conduct and other regulations and to also find out the perceived causes of their maladjustment.

**Method:** A 35 item questionnaire was developed for the purpose of this study titled 'Questionnaire on Institutional Regulations and Students' Adjustment Problem'. Two hundred (200) respondents were selected using both stratified and random sampling techniques. Three hypotheses were formulated at the 0.05 level of significance. The t test of independent samples, analysis of variance, and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

**Results:** Hypothesis one shows that students in the lower levels are not more maladjusted than students in the higher levels ( $t = 1.020$ ,  $df = 198$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and that male students are more maladjusted than female students ( $t = .009$ ,  $df = 198$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis two shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between participants' family background and adjustment level. ( $r = 0.426$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) while the third hypothesis shows that there is a joint and independent interaction of age, sex, college and service units on students adjustment ( $F(1, 162) = 3.614$ ,  $P = 0.05$ ),

**Conclusion:** The study shows the need for policy and plans including making the university counselling centre more effective so as to reduce the number of students circumventing the laid down rules and regulations. These would reduce the alarming rise in delinquency, truancy and anti-social behaviours among the students.

**Keywords:** students, adjustment, Institutional regulations, service units, Covenant University.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The research work centres on students' adjustment problems to institutional regulations. The society at large encompasses a variety of complex people who like to do things when they like, where they like, how they like and for various different reasons. In the pursuit of one's personal interest, a life can be lost. Based on this reason, checks and balances need to be created, therefore, the emergence of rules and regulations. Regulation is an official rule, law, or order stating what may or may not be done or how something must be done. Rules are directives, guidelines, parameters, instructions, and byelaws meant for the purpose of control of people in a society.

Covenant University is an institution of higher learning and it is domiciled in the society because the institution is one of the units of a society. It requires the use of rules and regulations for its day to day activities. It is from the institution that one begins to find him/herself in other groups such as academic associations, religious fellowships and social clubs. The institution is also a combination of people from different places with different dreams, ambitions, personality and family background. No two persons are exactly the same. Therefore, for smooth running of the institution the management had to make rules and regulations for the entire student body and these rules are to be obeyed or else erring students are sanctioned.

The phase of being a youth is normally characterized by an overwhelming urge to be free and sometimes this is achieved through rebellion. According to Damon (1999) as children grow, they are increasingly exposed to influences beyond the family. They try to strike a balance between what they learn at home and outside the home and want to experiment to see which value favours and profits them. Young people often behave "abnormally" and according to Freud (1956), for adolescents to behave normal is itself "abnormal". Behaviour for the socially maladjusted student is motivated by self-

gain and strong survival skills. Most of these students demonstrate a lack of appropriate concern for their behaviours and its effects on others. In addition, socially maladjusted youth display behaviour which may be highly valued within a small subgroup, but which may not be within the range of culturally permissible behaviour.

Covenant University has a set of rules that is peculiar to the university, and these rules are structured to prevent or alleviate youth maladjustment. Youth maladjustment is defined as the relative inability of youth to engage in successful and appropriate interpersonal relationships and in work, play, and academic activities over time with relative freedom from noxious social behaviours and burdensome emotions (Trotter, 1989). Some of these rules are completely different from what the society at large abides by. Many of the undergraduates and people outside the university community find these rules absurd. People also feel the stringent rules are obscure. Some people see these rules as restriction of rights, while others see them as most appropriate due to the generational decadence in morality and its attendant consequences.

It has been observed over the years in Covenant University that despite thorough warnings against breaking school rules and regulations, the student disciplinary committee (SDC), which is body established to serve as students' court, keep meeting to deliberate over cases that are closely related to one another. Due to the peculiarity of the regulations at the University, disobedience seems to be rampant and therefore the need to address the situation. Due to the desire of students to always have their way, they tend to rebel against what they do not want. Also, the unrepentant and unremorseful attitude displayed by some students when presented before the SDC is very alarming. It is even more appalling, the fact that some students are caught committing the same offence several times over. Because of this justification, a study like this becomes imperative. No study has ever been carried out on students' adjustment to the rules and regulation in Covenant University.

In the United States, Anderson, Carmichael, Harper & Huang (2009) argued that adjustment issues of international students could be viewed from five main aspects: psychological issues (e.g. homesickness, isolation, loneliness, hopelessness, helplessness, frustration, depression), academic issues (e.g. language and communication, difficulty in adjust to the academic culture, use of library structures and services), sociocultural issues (e.g. cultural shock, cultural fatigue, racial discrimination), residential transition challenges (e.g. counseling and health services, documentation issues, dietary restrictions) and career development issues. Evidences indicate that adjusting to college requires the complementary processes of de-socialization and socialization (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Poduska, 1980). According to these authors, de-socialization is the changing or discarding of selected values, beliefs, and traits one brings to college in response to the college exposition and taking on some of the new values, attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives to which one is exposed at college. Thus, adjustment is the process of learning and internalizing the character, culture and behavioral norms of the institution one is attending.

Table 1: Common Characteristics of Maladjusted Youth.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Socially maladjusted</b>
School behaviour	Seen as unwilling to comply; generally low achievement; excessive absences; rejects help, callous disregard for rights/needs of others.
Attitude towards school	Tends to dislike school except as a place for social contacts, rebels against rules and structure.
School attendance	Chooses to go truant.
Educational performance	Normally academically low
Interpersonal dynamics	Often shows ego strength in school situations, tends to be independent and appears self-assured; generally reacts towards situations with appropriate affect but lacks appropriate guilt (underdeveloped conscience); may show courage, even responsibility and imagination, but towards socially undesirable ends; often blames others for their problems, but otherwise is really oriented; demonstrates knowledge of social expectations in school and chooses not to conform to those expectations.
Conscience development	Little remorse; pleasure seeking; lack of empathy; knows right from wrong but chooses wrong.

**American Journal of Community Psychology (Lorian, Cowen & Caldwell, 1975).**

Longitudinal studies show that students who will have problem behaviours in adolescence and possibly beyond frequently have already been marked by many problems during childhood. Some researchers (Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller and Skinner, 1991; Farrington & West, 1990 and Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1989) have described adolescents as emerging from families in which parents have been hostile and neglectful and perhaps, overtly abusive, the adolescents themselves are likely to be aggressive and violent at ages as young as 8 years. Inadequate parental support may halt an adolescent's process of normal social-emotional development at a level appropriate for early elementary school students. With the onset of puberty, the adolescent's inadequate level of social maturity can result in hostile, anti-social activity, a lack of self-direction and a deficit in the process of identity formation. Adjustment with university life is considered one of the main indicators of success in university life (Al-khatib, Awamleh & Samawi, 2012). Youth adjustment is focused on youth's ability to match emotional and behavioural responses to demands across time, people, and settings (Lorian, Cowen, & Caldwell, 1975).

There are many definitions of adjustment. Sufian (2004) defined it as the individual's ability to fulfill his psychological needs and his self-acceptance as well as enjoying life without any types of conflicts and accepting social activities and participation in social activities. It is a behaviour directed to overcome the obstacles or the techniques used by people to fulfill needs and satisfy motives as well as reducing pressure to achieve balance and satisfaction (Al-ananni, 2005).

Wilson (2004) tried to explore the university adjustment among Zambian university students. The sample of the study consisted of 242 male and female students from the first year and 60 male and female students of fourth level students. The findings showed that there are problems in university adjustment due to the potentials and services of the university. Al-amayra (1988) study applied on 582 male and female students at Yarmouk University showed that the most adjustment problems among students were the economic domain, the study domain, social domain, psychological domain and health domain. Moreover, there were no differences in adjustment problems due to college or living place while there were differences attributed to gender in favour of male students.

Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteyn (2012) conducted a meta-analytical review of 75 recently published studies that reported the effects of universal, school-based social, emotional, and/or behavioural (SEB) programs. The analyzed interventions had a variety of intended outcomes, but the increase in social skills and decrease in antisocial behavior were most often reported. Although considerable differences in efficacy exist, the analysis demonstrated that overall beneficial effects on all seven major categories of outcomes occurred: social skills, antisocial behaviour, substance abuse, positive self-image, academic achievement, mental health, and prosocial behaviour. Generally, immediate effects were stronger than delayed effects, with the exception of substance abuse, which showed a sleeper effect.

## **1.1 Research Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** Male students are more maladjusted than female students.

**Ho2:** There will be a positive and significant relationship between participants' family background and adjustment level.

**Ho3:** There will be a joint and independent interaction of age, sex, college and service units on the adjustment of participants.

## **1.2 Ethical considerations**

According to Cohen and Swerdik (2010), ethics pertain to a body of principles of right, proper or good conduct. They asserted that a respondent that is involved in a research study has the right: to give informed consent; to be informed of the results; the right to privacy and confidentiality; and not to be labelled in a stigmatizing manner. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the approving body in the university while consent letters were signed by the participating students agreeing to voluntarily participate in the study.

## **2 METHODS**

The population for the study comprised of all Covenant University students, as of the time of data collection, Covenant University had three (3) Colleges. Currently, there are four (4) Colleges in Covenant University. Two hundred (200) students with age ranging from 14 to 26 years with mean of

19.3 and SD of 3.07 were sampled across the three colleges and the first four levels (100 to 400 levels) due to an imbalance in levels across the colleges. Both sexes were involved. Proportional, stratified and systematic sampling were employed. Proportional sampling method was used to draw participants from the entire population due to the unequal ratio of the student population across the colleges. An equal opportunity was given to the entire population for participation. Stratified and systematic sampling was used to cater for variables such as gender, age and departments.

## **2.1 Instrumentation**

The researcher self-developed a questionnaire tagged “Questionnaire on Institutional Regulations and Students’ Adjustment Problem” (QIRSAP). The questionnaire was specifically developed to suit the peculiarity of the research setting.

## **2.2 Questionnaire on Institutional Regulation and Students’ Adjustment Problem**

The questionnaire was in two sections: the demographic part which collected respondents’ data on age, sex, level of study, college and if they belong to any service unit. Service units connote group in the church such as ushering, choral unit, drama unit and the protocol group among others. The second section was a Likert type rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The first section had five items and the second section had thirty items.

## **2.3 Psychometric Properties of QIRSAP**

### *2.3.1 Pilot Study*

A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the usability of the scale. An equal number of participants per college were used. There were a total of sixty participants; twenty representing each college.

### *2.3.2 Validity of the instrument*

The questionnaire was tested for validity and was discovered that it had content validity; that is, each item measured exactly what it was intended to measure. Content Validity assesses whether the questions cover the range of behaviours normally considered to be part of the dimension one is assessing, (Bordens and Abbot, 2002). The scale has a discriminant validity with the Voluntary Counselling and Testing Questionnaire (VCTQ).

### *2.3.3 Reliability of the instrument*

The reliability of the instrument was tested with a single test using the split-half method. The split was done by using the odd-even number method. The split half reported a correlation of 0.87 which was considered reliable enough. The researcher and three research assistants administered the questionnaires and they were completed on the spot by the participants. This method ensured a 100 percent response rate. The statistical tools used to analyze the data include independent t-test statistic, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson’s correlation.

## **3 RESULTS**

### **3.1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants**

The age of the participants range from 14 to 26 years with mean of 19.3 and SD of 3.07. The gender categorization shows that there were 73 (36%) male and 127 (64%) female participants. A furthermore breakdown of their colleges shows that 80 (40%) were from the College of Business and Social Sciences, 40 (20%) were students of the College of Human Development and 80 (40%) were from the College Science and Technology. Furthermore, the data on participation in service groups shows that 69 (34%) belongs to one or more service groups while the remaining 131 (66%) do not belong to any service group.

**Hypothesis 1:** Male students are more maladjustments than female students.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation, and t-value of respondents according to Gender

Gender	No of Cases	Mean	SD	df	Calc t	Sig.
Male	73	72.4110	9.08729	198	.009	<0.05
Female	127	68.9213	8.64614			

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value is significant ( $t=.009$ ,  $df =198$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Based on this result, the hypothesis was sustained.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be a positive and significant relationship between participants' family background and adjustment level.

Table 3: Correlation analysis for adjustment and family background.

Variable	Number	Mean	SD	R	p
Adjustment	200	32.2450	6.9314	0.426**	<0.05
Family background	200	33.8450	9.2985		

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 3 shows the correlation between adjustment and family background to be significant ( $r=0.426$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Based on this result, hypothesis 2 was sustained.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be a joint and independent interaction of age, sex, college and service units on the adjustment of participants.

Table 4: Univariate Analysis of Variance on a joint and independent interaction of age, sex, college and service units on the adjustment of participants.

Source	Type III SS	df	Mean square	F	Significance
Corrected model	3298.516 <sup>a</sup>	37	89.149	1.143	.281
Intercept	297044.764	1	297044.764	3809.810	.000
Age	247.926	3	82.642	1.060	>0.05
Sex	281.766	1	281.766	3.614	0.05
College	13.703	2	6.852	.088	>0.05
Service unit	81.314	1	81.314	1.043	>0.05
Age*sex*unit	7.686	1	7.686	.099	>0.05
Age*sex*college*s/unit	294.895	1	294.895	3.782	<0.05
Error	12630.879	162	77.968		
Total	1001397.000	200			
Corrected total	15929.395	199			

Table 4 shows the independent and joint interaction of age, sex, and college and service unit on students' adjustment. There is an independent interaction between sex and adjustment ( $F_{(1, 162)} = 3.614$ ,  $P=0.05$ ). There is a joint interaction of college of participants, service units, age and sex on adjustment ( $F_{(1, 162)} = 3.782$ ,  $P=0.05$ ). Based on this result, it was confirmed that there is a joint and independent interaction of age, sex, college and service units on the adjustment of participants. Therefore, the hypothesis was sustained.

## 4 DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis states that male participants are more maladjusted than females. Hence, male students are more likely to exhibit anti-social and deviant behaviour compared to females. Also male students have a greater tendency to break school rules compared to females but female students have a greater tendency to commit anti-moral offences than males. A law such as promiscuity is an

example of an anti-moral law. In Covenant University, males tend to get into some form of trouble and have to face either suspension or expulsion for offences such as theft, drunkenness, fighting, violation of exeat permit, which refers to permission for a short leave from school because the university is fully residential, examination malpractice, drug and tobacco use, possession of pornographic materials among others. It is not that female students do not engage in some of these acts but there are just a few of them compared to male students. Female students engage more in dress code violation and insubordination. Drawing inference from this, it can be seen that male students will definitely have more adjustment problems than female students. In America, between 10 and 25 percent of gang members nationwide are female (Campbell, 1984). Over the years girl gangs have rapidly increased in both membership and activities. Supporting this, Rochester Youth Development study (1992) stated that the extent and nature of female participation has changed considerably over the last few decades. Their findings show increased participation in gangs (about equal to that of males) and in gang-related activities, including serious delinquent acts and drug abuse. Female gangs often have male affiliates, though not all of them do. For many of the gang members, the gang takes the place of a family. This is to say that females are getting more deviant and have the tendency to meet up with the maladjustment level of males.

The second hypothesis proves that there is a significant relationship between participants' family background and maladjustment level. How a person is raised can determine how the person will live outside the confines of his/her home. The kind of things one's parents tolerate or do not determine to a great extent, the kind of rules and norms the person will be able to cope with. For example, students whose parents do not bother about their movements or whereabouts will have a big problem coping with the exeat rule. There are numerous empirical studies, which have identified various family variables, which strongly correlate with socially maladjusted behaviour. For example, families of antisocial or socially maladjusted children are often found to have little positive parental involvement with the child, utilize harsh or inconsistent discipline, and provide poor monitoring of the child's activities. Dishion et al (1991) postulates that distant and inconsistent parents may set the stage for early associations with aggressive peers, the effects of which are seen more intensively in adolescence and may also continue towards later dysfunctional behaviours in adulthood. Also, Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey (1989) stated that in most cases, the problem child is a member of the family who is most often involved in coercive exchanges.

A child who comes from a family that the parents argue or fight all the time and the siblings are also always fighting, may communicate the message that violence is normal and may thus be a good platform for learning violence. Also children who grew up not having anybody to tell them what to wear to different events may experience some form of freedom with their wardrobe and will have a great problem having someone restrict their mode of dressing. Therefore, adjustment to the dress code rule may constitute a challenge. If misbehaviour in children and youth should be addressed, it should begin with their family because that is where children learn most of their initial behaviours aside the one's they learn from their friends and their environment. This view is supported by Kazdin (1987) who postulates that the most favourable outcomes of interventions occur when they are done with concurrent parent-training programs. Today's generation of parents have focused their attention on more economic and other pressing issues, that paying attention to their children has become a matter of secondary assignment. This is why a lot of children are finding it difficult knowing their left from their right because there was barely anybody around to show them the best way to go. If more parents can pay greater attention to their children, the rate of social maladjustment will reduce to an appreciable and manageable level.

The result of hypothesis three states that there is a joint and independent interaction of age, sex, college and service units on the adjustment of participants. The variables of the demographic part of the questionnaire was not wholly dependent on one another although, not wholly independent. This means that even though the person is a male, his age did matter in determining his adjustment level. Further analysis revealed that younger students (100 and 200 level) were more adjusted than older students (300 and 400 level) and this may be due to their being malleable. Fresh and sophomore students tend to easily yield to rules and regulations compared to students who have somewhat understood the idiosyncrasies of the university and are able to circumvent the rules at will. The sex of a student does not determine whether one will be in a service unit or not, even though to a large extent it did. Just the same way some people feel females are more religious than males.

## 4.1 Conclusion

The result obtained from this study implies that if the situation is not addressed, as the years go by, there may be worse cases encountered by the school authority due to the fact that the generational decadence is getting worse by the day. In days, weeks, months and years to come, there will be a constant increase in maladjustment to school's rules if this issue is not addressed. The level of truancy, delinquency, anti-social behaviours in the school and society at large will be alarming. Students in the category of maladjustment will end up constituting a problem to themselves, family and society at large. To reduce maladjustment, all efforts are being made by the university to raise a new generation of leaders by inculcating morality and a sense of responsibility and direction in the students.

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