

## A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NEW STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENT TO UNIVERSITY

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### Abstract

Adjustment among new students at the university plays an important role in determining their success at university. This study showed one of the reasons students fail to complete their study is due to adjustment problems. Students found to be unable to deal with the challenges and demands on campus and experience a variety of problems that some of them failed to proceed to the next semester. The population of the study consist of 143 First Semester Diploma students in the Faculty of Business and Management studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang Raub Campus. The instrument used is questionnaires. There are four subscales designed to measure the effectiveness of student adjustment to university that are academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment. The study shows that adaptability on campus has a relationship with psychosocial abilities possessed by the students. Among the psychosocial abilities have a positive and significant impact on student adjustment is emotional intelligence, coping, and social support. All three of these psychosocial capabilities found to play an important role in helping students adjust at the university. Thus, the university must take proactive steps to develop emotional intelligence, coping and social support among new students to improve their adaptability.

**Keywords:** Adjustments to university, new students, academic excellence

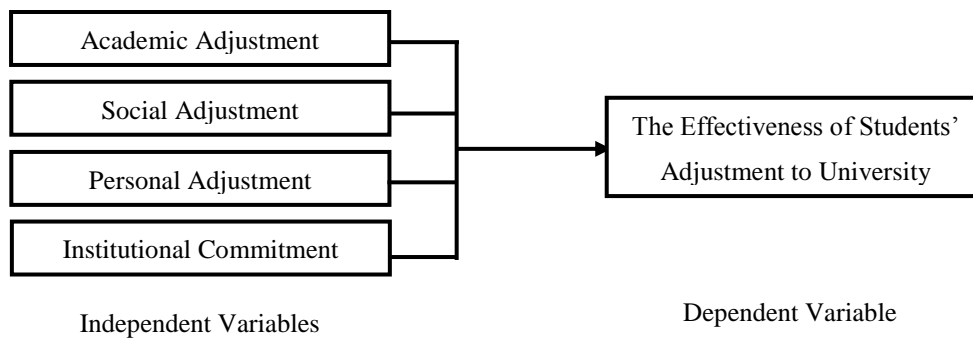
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### Introduction

To pursue higher education deserves a recognition that is encouraging and rewarding for students. However, many new students are less able to face the challenges of life in campus that some could not complete their study (Jain, 2017). Past research shows that many students cannot continue their studies to the second semester because they could not handle various problems encountered in campus. Christo & Oyinlade (2015) reported that 33% of students enrolled in four-year programs in the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO) failed to earn a degree and 14% leaves the university before the second year of study. A study conducted by Respondek (2017) reported that the transition from secondary education to higher education is a difficult experience for most first-year students. This condition causes them to face adjustments problems in campus. New students are often confronted with personal and interpersonal challenges in the new university entrance. These challenges include the need to build new relationships in campus especially if they live far from campus, modify their relationships with parents as well as other family members and establish new learning habits in line with the new academic environment (Wijekoon et al., 2017). Failure to address these challenges is a major cause of students leaving university (Jain, 2017) or affects their academic performance at the university (Dean, 2017). Other challenges that may become a source of stress to new students are planning for their future, struggling with exams and assignments, dealing with lecturers, choosing area of specialization and learning to be independent financially and emotionally (Karaman et al., 2019). Thus, it can be considered that almost all new students will go through the adjustment phase when entering university (Dixit, 2016). In fact, research shows that the first six weeks in campus is a critical period in determining the retention of students in universities (Jain, 2017).

The study of the problem of adjustment of new students in the local universities found that students also cannot escape the problem of adjustment. Van Rooji Jansen & Van de Grift (2018) reported the main problems faced by new students at Netherlands are financial problems, academic problems, health problems and personal problems. Examples of academic problems they faced are not registering courses, not understanding the textbook in English and not attending classes. In addition, they are also found to have financial problems. So, what caused the students failed to complete their studies while they are the selected students who offered to the programs at the university based on the excellent or good results, they achieved in examinations in the pre-university education levels? Past research shows the failure of students to proceed to the next semester at the university is due to adjustment problems (Krumrei et al., 2013). According to Christo & Oyinlade (2015), the main factors which caused the student withdraws from the program which consist of academic difficulties, adaptation, vague goals, commitments, financial issues, incompatibilities between students and institutions and isolation.

In this study, there are four subscales designed to measure the effectiveness of student adjustment to university that are academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment as illustrated in Figure 1. Here, the effectiveness of students' adjustment to university is the dependent variable, while academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment are the independent variables.



**Figure 1.** The Theoretical Framework

According to Wallaert (2018), academic adjustment is made up of demands in academic education that must be met by the students. It covers aspects such as motivation (attitude and motivation toward goal and academic tasks), application (the extent to which motivation is reflected in the efforts of actual academic or the success of academic requirement met by the students), performance (the effectiveness of academic function) and academic environment (satisfaction the academic environment at the university). Social adjustment means demands in terms of students' participation in social activities (Higgins, 2015). It includes relationships with others in campus, contact with family members after being away from them and fulfilling the social environment at the university include the satisfaction of the dormitory and extracurricular activities offered. According to (Dixit, 2016), personal (emotional) adjustment is the claim of psychological and physical aspects of the students. In this study, the demands from the psychology aspects that must be met are as emotional stability, control feelings and thoughts, stress and anxiety. The demands from physical aspects faced by the students include physical fitness, sleep, appetite and weight conditions. Finally, institutional adjustment requires students to establish a degree of satisfaction with education in general and in particular to the university the students are studying. It is also called institutional commitment Wallaert (2018). Here, satisfaction is evaluated based on the students' commitment to the goals of the institution, the quality of education and the relationship built between the students and the university. Therefore, the research objectives of this study are to know the extent of adjustment among Semester One students at the Faculty of Business and Management (FPDP) in UiTM Pahang Raub Campus and to study the relationship between the components of adjustment among them.

Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1 There is a significant relationship between institutional commitments and academic adjustment.
- H2 There is a significant relationship between institutional commitments and personal (emotional) adjustment.
- H3 There is a significant relationship between institutional commitments and social adjustment.
- H4 There is a significant relationship between personal (emotional) adjustments with academic adjustment.
- H5 There is a significant relationship between personal (emotional) adjustments with social adjustment.
- H6 There is a significant relationship between social adjustment and academic adjustment.

Studies that have been done show adjustment can provide pressure and challenge to most new students (Higgins, 2015). However, studies such as this have never been conducted at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). The issue of adjustment cannot be underestimated as it can be a critical phase and influence of students' academic achievement. Thus, at UiTM level, this study should be conducted to have a better understand of the actual experience students go during the adjustment phase. By having better understanding of the real situation, it is will further help students to achieve academic success. It will be a major disadvantage for UiTM education system if problems like this have a negative impact on the students' academic achievement. As is known, only the selected students who perform well academically will continue their studies in the higher learning institutions. Hopefully, the academic potential possessed by these outstanding students can be maintained and developed despite the occurrence of institutional change.

### **Methods**

This is a field research in which one or more independent variables and the dependent variables are studied among students in the FPDP taking Diploma at UiTM Pahang Raub Campus. The study also used the stratified random sampling taken from different groups of the population sample which composed of students taking Diploma in Banking (DIB) and Diploma in Business Management (DBS) studies programs. The sampling consists of Semester One students from June to October 2016 study sessions. According to the Students' Academic Affairs Division (BHEA), the number of student intake in the FPDP was 289. Thus, the selected sample size is a total of 169 students referring to Krejcie and Morgan's Sampling and Population Table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The distribution of sampling consists of 49.7% students from the DIB and 50.3% from the DBS program. Based on the objectives of the study, a quantitative approach using a questionnaire is used to obtain the research data. The instrument was administered when students were in Semester One before they sit for their First Semester Final Examination. The data collection was conducted face to face between the researcher and the study sample. The samples were collected in the classroom and the study sample were given a period of 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The study samples were also briefed on the objectives and procedures of the research. Since the number of study samples is different in each classroom, the sample size for each program is also different. A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 143 (84.1%) questionnaires were used for further analysis, while 27 (15.9%) questionnaires could not be used because they were incomplete. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, Part A on demographic information (personal) and Part B is related to adjustment disclosures. The items related to adjustment disclosures is adapted from (Krumrei et al., 2013).

### **Result and Discussion**

Data from this study were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Table 1 describes the respondents' background based on gender, age, and race, the composition of the respondents' family income, the type of secondary school attended and their achievements in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Examination. Of the 143 respondents, 45.5% were male and 54.5% were women. Based on the location of residence, 48.3% of respondents are from urban and 51.7% from rural areas. In terms of education, the type of secondary school attended by them also differs in which 15.4% were from residential schools, 71.3% from the government secondary schools and 13.3% from

other types of school. The findings showed that majority of the respondents are good students. They performed well in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Examination in 2015. 53.7% of the respondents scored between 5As and 7As, 37.2% between 3As and 4As, 7.7% between 1A and 2As and the remaining 1.4% gains 8As and above.

**Table 1.** Respondents' Background

	Items	Number of Respondents (%)
Gender	Male	45.5
	Female	54.5
Age	17-20 years	99.1
	Over 21 years	0.9
Race	Malays	97.7
	Others	2.1
Residence	Urban area	48.3
	Rural area	51.7
Respondents' Family Income	RM1,001-RM1,500	25.2
	RM1,501-RM2,000	7.7
	RM2,001-RM3,000	5.6
	RM3,001 and above	11.2
Type of Secondary School Attended	Residential schools	15.4
	Government secondary schools	71.3
	Other types of school	13.3
Stream of Classes	Science stream	32.2
	Arts stream	48.3
	Other streams	19.6
Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Examination Results	1As-2As	7.7
	3As-4As	37.2
	5As-7As	53.7
	8As and above	1.4

The validity of sixty-six items of the adjustment disclosures which is coordinated from 1 (Do not closely related to me) to 9 (Closely related to me) shows that the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant to measure the adequacy of the sampling size. Table 2 shows the Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.906.

**Table 2.** The Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.906
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	408.952
	d. f.	143
	Sig.	0.000

The method of Principle Axis Factoring (PAF) is used to determine the communality among the variables. Results showed that all items have communality more than 0.30. Total variance is explained in three stages. In the early stages, it shows that there are five factors with eigenvalues 11.827, 2.166, 1.788, 1.341 and 1.131 and the percentage explained is 42.238, 7.737, 6.385, 4.790 and 4.039. Referring to the eigenvalues given, it is estimated that there are four factors that will be extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1. If the four factors are extracted, 65.189% of the variance could be explained. The second stage shows the total variance explained in the final stage. Also, statistically exhibited the communality of the following four factors extracted. The eigenvalues for the four factors have been reduced to 11.445, 1.754, 1.368, 0.933 and 0.734 with the cumulative percentage variance of this factor has decreased to 57.975%. Finally, the third stage shows eigenvalues of each factor and total variance after each rotation. The eigenvalues changed to 4.798, 4.370, 2.848 and 1.893 with a cumulative 57.975% of the variance remains. Next, the Varimax rotation method was used to produce the matrix that contains the coefficients or loading factors which represents the correlation between the factors and variables. Results show that there are some genuine variables that have a capacity of

more than 0.30 in only one factor. The genuine variable Factor 1 consists of twenty-four items with a load factor between 0.49 and 0.798. Factor 2 consists of twenty items with a load factor between 0.445 and 0.697. Next, Factor 3 is made up of fifteen items with a load factor between 0.366 and 0.771. Finally, Factor 4 consists of seven items with factor loadings between 0.720 and 0.726. To meet the purpose of the study, these four factors are encoded with new names. Factor 1 is labelled as Academic Adjustment, Factor 2 is labelled as Social Adjustment, Factor 3 as Personal (Emotional) Adjustment and Factor 4 as Institutional Adjustment (Institutional Commitment).

Cronbach's Alpha reliability measurement techniques are used in this study to estimate the reliability and stability of the questionnaires. Results of the statistical scale shows that the mean value is 177.43 with 18.29 variance and standard deviation of 28.43 as shown in Table 3. The result also shows the reliability coefficient Alpha is 0.930. Here, the Cronbach's Alpha value is more than 0.700 (Hair et al., 2014, p.90-92). Overall, the adjustment disclosures items meet the statement of reliability purpose.

**Table 3.** Results of Reliability Analysis

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
177.43	18.29	28.43	66	0.930

Table 4 shows the Pearson correlation results. Correlation analysis was carried out to find out the direction and strength of the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The study found a significant positive correlation between academic adjustment with social adjustment ( $r = 0.537$ ), personal (emotional) adjustment ( $r = 0.772$ ) and institutional commitment ( $r = 0.560$ ) at  $\alpha = 0.010$  (two-tailed test). This means that academic adjustment is important in determining students' academic success when social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment are high. A significant positive correlation was also found between social adjustment with personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment ( $r = 0.465$  and  $r = 0.570$ ) at  $\alpha = 0.010$  (two-tailed test). This means that students' academic performance will be affected if they are emotionally unstable. Finally, there is a significant positive correlation was found between personal (emotional) adjustment with institutional commitment ( $r = 0.585$ ) at  $\alpha = 0.010$  (two-tailed test). It is possible that students will be successful if the quality of the relationship that is built between them and the university is good. These findings supported the research done by Azizah Rajab et al. (2014).

**Table 4.** Pearson Correlation Results

	Academic Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Personal (Emotional) Adjustment	Institutional Commitment
Academic Adjustment	1.000			
Social Adjustment	0.537**	1.000		
Personal (Emotional) Adjustment	0.772**	0.465**	1.000	
Institutional Commitment	0.560**	0.570**	0.585**	1.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $\alpha = 0.010$  (two-tailed test)

The first regression analysis takes academic adjustment as the dependent variable, while the social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment as independent variables. The value of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.580. This means that 58% of the variation in academic adjustment can be explained by the social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment. The F-value of 42.049 is greater than the F-value of 2.600 at  $\alpha = 0.050$ . This means that the model is valid at 95% confidence level in determining the change in academic adjustment. The second analysis takes social adjustment as the dependent variable, while the personal (emotional) and institutional commitment as independent variables. The value of  $R^2$  is 0.455. This shows that 45.5% change in social adjustment is explained by personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment. Further, the F-value of 16.504 is greater than the F-value of 3.000 at  $\alpha = 0.050$ . This means that the model is valid at 95% confidence level in determining the variation in

social adjustment. Finally, the third analysis takes personal (emotional) adjustment as the dependent variable and institutional commitment as the independent variables. The value of  $R^2$  is 0.216. This means that 21.6% change in personal (emotional) adjustment can be explained by the institutional commitment. The F-value of 8.810 is greater than the F-value of 3.010 at  $\alpha = 0.050$ . This means that the model is valid at 95% confidence level in determining the change in institutional commitment. Overall, the regression model is significant in determining the academic adjustments.

The hypotheses testing results showed that five of the six associations were significant at 95% confidence level with the t-value greater than 1.960 as illustrated in Table 5. Therefore, the hypotheses are accepted.

**Table 5.** The Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	t-test	Results
H1	2.936**	This indicates that at 95% confidence, there is statistically significant correlation between institutional commitments with academic adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.
H2	5.920**	This indicates that at 95% confidence, there is statistically significant correlation between institutional commitments with personal (emotional) adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.
H3	3.921**	This indicates that at 95% confidence, there is statistically significant correlation between institutional commitments with social adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.
H4	6.415**	This indicates that at 95% confidence, there is statistically significant correlation between personal (emotional) adjustments with academic adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.
H5	3.799**	This indicates that at 95% confidence, there is statistically significant correlation between personal (emotional) adjustments with academic adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.
H6	1.022	This indicates that at 95% confidence, there is no statistically significant correlation between social adjustments with academic adjustment. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

\*\* The t-test is significant at the t-value of 1.960 (d. f.) = 101 at  $\alpha = 0.050$  (two-tailed test)

In summary, the descriptive analysis showed that majority of the respondents is made up of intelligent students who obtain a good SPM result of 5As and above. Factor analysis results showed that all variables in this study meet the purpose of statistical reliability of Cronbach's Alpha. Further, the study found that academic adjustment has a significant positive correlation with social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment. Next, regression analysis results showed that personal (emotional) adjustment factor affects 58% of the academic adjustments. The study also found that personal (emotional) adjustment has a strong influence in shaping the social adjustment of the students which supported the research done by Kaljahi (2016). The analysis showed that 45.5% change in the personal (emotional) adjustment affects the social adjustment factor. Finally, the hypotheses testing results showed that five of the six associations were significant at 95% confidence level with the t-value greater than 1.960 and the hypotheses are accepted. Overall, the study supported the research done by Higgins (2015) that personal (emotional) adjustment factor has the highest estimate in this model.

### Conclusion

To sum, various aspects should be emphasized by students in order to improve their academic achievement. The focus should not only be on aspects of cognitive (thinking) alone. The adjustment problem among university students is one of the important issues dealt with at the international level as well as local. Students should be exposed to a variety of strategies and resources that can help them accept and react to changes immediately and be more comfortable in facing the adjustment process. The study also found that the adjustment problems have an impact on student achievement. The available indicators that most affect student achievement in the DIB and DBS study programs is

academic adjustments such as motivation, application, self-development and feel comfortable with the environment. Academic adjustment is an important indicator for predicting academic achievement as it also covers the preparation and participation of students in the academic achievements of the past and experience in the relevant field. It is clearly shown here that if students feel uncomfortable with academic adjustment, it will have a negative impact and affect their performance. It can be seen from the results of the study that in order to ensure that students are able to adapt comfortably in academic aspects, in particular, attention should be given also to the aspects of social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment. This supports the research done by (Krumrei et al., 2013) stated that if students have problems with social adjustment, personal (emotional) adjustment and institutional commitment, it will affect the level of their academic adjustments and ultimately, will give a negative impact on their achievement.

According to Miles (2017), a good academic adjustment depends on the students' emotional stability and involvement in social activities in the institution. A stable emotional state means that students are happy with controlled emotion. Therefore, various aspects must be addressed not only by students but also lecturers and management to improve and enhance the adjustment capacity of students at the university to express the desire of UiTM in producing holistic graduates. Finally, in line with the findings, further research is needed to identify steps that can be taken to improve the overall level of students' adjustment in the UiTM system. A quantitative study can also be performed to identify factors that can affect the level of students' adjustment.

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