

THE PROBLEMS FACED BY ADOLESCENTS IN ADAPTING THEMSELVES WITH HOSTEL LIFE

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This study aims to determine the problems faced by adolescence in adapting themselves with hostel life. There are four factors which influence this problem, namely: gender, social economic status, parents' level of education and also the number of siblings who further study at higher level institutions. This study is an exploratory study where the samples are of random sampling consisting of 105 Form One students in the year 2012. (Mean age = 12.92, S.D. = .34). The instrument used is "The Michigan International Student Problem Inventory" (MISPI) which is used to measure the adaptation problem among students. The statistical analysis comprising of t-test and correlation coefficient are used to test the hypotheses at a significant level of $p < .05$. The findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference in terms of gender. There is also no relationship between adaptation problem and social economic status, parents' level of education and the number of siblings who further studies at higher level of institution. Nevertheless, the coefficient correlation showed that there is a positive significant relationship between adaptation problem with the effectiveness in counseling given by the school counselor ($r = .36$, $p < .100$). Therefore, the researchers conclude that to cater for students who have problems in adapting themselves to the hostel life, a suitable system is needed in order to help them such as counseling session or mentoring programs and an effective orientation week because these can help students get accustomed to the hostel life easily and quickly.

Keywords: Adaptation problem, Problems experiences, Form One students, Problems at the hostel, Adolescence.

Introduction

Adaptation is usually related to the concept of 'accommodation and adaptation' whereby an individual will strive for survival in the physical and social environment. In Malaysia, the starting age for students to be enrolled in a boarding school especially to a fully funded government boarding school is 13 years, or Form one in a secondary school, and usually at this age the students will undergo transition process from children to early adolescent where at this stage, they are considered to have entered the adolescent world (Man, 1997; Monks, Knoers & Haditono, 2004). Mahmood Nazar (2005) said that students at this age will experience various problems such as physical and mental changes, trials and tribulations of growing and identity seeking which take place as they grow.

With regards to the transition process, the researchers decided to pursue this study. This is because the researchers would like to measure how far students who have just entered adolescent stage have the ability to adapt themselves with hostel life since these students have never been apart from their parents and they have to undergo new situations at the hostel.

Besides that, according to Erikson (1982), the main key in the transition process (early adolescent) is the development of confidence among students where they have already set their mission and vision in education and career. Nevertheless, confusion about their roles does exist and thus it is difficult to determine their education and career goals as they mature. A similar study done by Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun and Pelletier (2001) towards university students also found that majority of the Year One students experienced adaptation problem at the campus due to the transition process from secondary school system to a higher level of system of education. This is supported by the findings by Syed Mansur and Othman (2011) on Year One students at Tun Razak College, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in Skudai, Johor. The result showed that although the students are among selected ones (excel academically) in the school and matriculation or pre-university levels, they still experience adaptation problem and the main problem is to adapt themselves with the new surroundings. Here, we can conclude that even matured students have adaptation problem. Thus, students who are in the early adolescent stage would have worse adaptation problem.

Omar (2009) found that students who enter boarding schools also experience several problems especially adapting with the new learning and teaching system which involves the changing process from primary school system to secondary school's which causes the students especially the Form one students to feel difficult in adapting to the new environment. This failure to adapt themselves to their new surroundings, if not studied and remedied, will cause negative behavior among them and may cause their academic performance to deteriorate.

To understand this issue more deeply, Darlega and Janda (1986) divided the term adaptation to four levels or phases. The first phase is the ability to adapt oneself towards daily problems. In the second phase, adaptation will involve disengagement of psychological problem and the feeling of freedom. The third phase is when one gets to adapt oneself effectively and has his/her goal to achieve. Finally is the self-acceptance which is the most important factor in the adaptation process where this factor refers to how one tried to understand and accept one's surroundings. This self-acceptance factor is supported through research done by Ahmad, Saleh, Jelas and Seman (2010) where the level of students' self-acceptance towards school dynamics in terms of ethnics show positive relationship with students' background.

The effect of not being able to adapt oneself with the environment is that one will try to find a new surrounding by leaving the present environment where Man (1997) stressed that students are inclined to make a decision to transfer to another school because they have failed to adapt themselves with the school surroundings. Based on previous research done on students in a boarding school in Selangor who have succeeded and failed to adapt themselves in new school surroundings by Ragbir (1993), found that there are four main problems which are usually experienced by students and they are adaptation problems that relate to self, social, hostel and school accommodation. Tinto (1996) also supported the findings where he claimed that adaptation problem is the main reason that causes students to withdraw from their studies.

If this issue persists without any research done to seek the cause for the problems faced by the students, it will become a phenomenon which will fail the government's intention of building a stable human capital because these students will generate problems in the future. This will incur a great loss to the Ministry if students continue to experience adaptation problems and affect their academic performance. Safura and Supriyantini (2006) found a positive relationship among students who are 13 years of age and self-adaptation process toward academic performance where the higher the level of self adaptation the better they are academically. Thus, this problem has to be researched to ensure that positive input can be produced to ensure that students will be able to adapt themselves with hostel life and consequently able to achieve great academic performance.

Based on previous research done by Abdullah, et. al., 2009; Ahmad, et. al., 2010; Man, 1997; Omar, 2009; Perry, et. al., 2001; Ragbir, 1993; Raju & Rahamtulla, 2007; Safura & Supriyantini, 2006; Syed

Mansor & Othman, 2011; Tinto, 1996, it can be deduced that the adaptation process among students who newly entered secondary school, generally, and students who enter boarding schools, specifically, experienced adaptation process. Thus, this study is conducted to:-

1. Examining the adaptation problems in terms of gender.
2. Discovering the relationship between levels of adaptation problems with family income.
3. Identifying the relationship between adaptation problems with the level of parents' education.
4. Identifying the relationship between the level of adaptation problems with the number of siblings who further studies at higher level of institutions.
5. Examining the relationship of counselling sessions and adaptation problems with adolescence staying in the hostel

Methodology

This study is conducted in one of the Government fully funded boarding school in the district of Pendang, Kedah, Malaysia. The sample consists of 105 Form One students of 13 years of age in the year 2012 (boys= 42.9%, girls= 57.1%). The information required to conduct this research is obtained through the questionnaire which is distributed to them. This study employs random sampling and through this method of sampling, each respondent will get the same opportunity to be selected as sample (Idris, 2010). Students are selected at random through the name list according to classed provided by the school administration and the name list is represented in jumbled-up numbers.

The total number of Form One students is 144 and the sample to represent this study is 105 based on sample calculation by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Instrumentation

This study is conducted by using questionnaire distributed to all samples. The questionnaire consists of two important sections. The first section is related to the socio-demography of the samples which elicit information such as gender, ethnic group, the highest level of education of the head of the family, family monthly income, age of the head of the family and the number of siblings furthering studies in higher institutions.

In the second section, the questionnaire is taken from Man (1997) who adapted from "The Michigan International Student Problem Inventory" (MISPI) with the coefficient relation of 0.57 – 0.87 for all the six dimensions namely financial, academic, food and lodging, social orientation and facilities. Examples of questions asked based on the dimensions are:

Financial: "I have enough money to buy food at the canteen".

Academic: "I get academic help personally from the teachers".

Food & Lodging: "My relationship with my dorm mates is close".

Social: "I feel lonely when I am at school".

Facilities: "I have the opportunity to play my favorite games in the evening".

The samples are asked to respond accordingly of which of the statements they perceive to be true and represent what they feel based on the given Likert scale: 1- absolutely agree, 2 – agree, 3 – do not agree, 4 – absolutely do not agree. Researchers have not included the scale "unsure" to avoid respondents from taking the easy way out of not wanting to think deeply.

Research Procedure

Researchers obtained permission from the school principal to conduct the study on the Form One students. Data collection is through questionnaire distributed to all Form One students gathered in the school hall. The session took 30 minutes. For students who stay at the hostel, the researchers also obtained permission from the warden who takes the role as their guardian. The warden and the students have agreed to complete the questionnaire and sign the letter of consent. The questionnaire consists of 36 items; 7 items for socio demography section, 29 items for 'problems to adapt' inventory. The respondents are instructed to give their responses based on the Likert scale, as mentioned earlier. For the second section that is 'problems to adapt' inventory. All the items are positive statements whereby the scale 4 represents 'having problem' and 1 as having no problem' except for items number 15, 17, 18, 21 and 22 which give negative statements to represent scale that is reversed.

Findings and Discussion

The overall number of respondents is 105 students (age=13, sd=.00), of 45 boys (42.86%) and 60 girls (57.14%). The first objective of the research is to seek the difference in adapting problems between boys and girls ($t=-.12, p>.05$). The findings of this study rejects the findings of the studies conducted by Carver, Younger & Perry, 2003; Man, 1997 whereby the research related to adapting problem showed differences in terms of gender. The findings by Raju and Rahamtulla (2007) which was conducted on students of 13 years of age showed that there is difference that existed between girls and boys are only in financial and emotional aspects. This may be due to the fact that the samples selected were Form One students in only one boarding school. However, the reason is equivalent to the reason made by Erikson (1982) where the selected samples have developed self-confidence in the transition process during the early adolescent stage and have succeeded in adapting themselves with the hostel environment.

For the second objective, there is no relationship between the level of adapting problem with family monthly income ($r =.10, p>.05$). The minimum and maximum wages are RM300 and Rm21, 020 consequently with standard deviation of 3953.37. According to the study conducted by Raju and Rahamtulla (2007), female students are given more attention for their personal needs compared to male students. Man (1997) stated that students with family monthly income of RM1, 505 – RM2,000 have a higher level of adapting problem compared to students in the other income category.

However, findings from this study found that there is no relationship between adapting problem and family monthly income which could be due to the fact that students' parents are prepared in terms of finance when registering or enrolling their children in a boarding school. Besides that, there are also financial aids such as rewards in academic performance and government scholarship given to students who are selected to study in a boarding school and usually it is because of their academic excellence. Parents also need not worry about facilities especially food and lodging are provided for six times daily.

There is also no relationship between adapting problem and the level of education of the family leader ($r=.02, p>.05$). Based on the study by Mishra and Singh (1998), the level of parents' education influences their children' aspiration level. The study by Raju and Rahamtulla (2007) on the other hand, found that there is significant relationship between adapting problem and the level of parents' education whereby parents who are highly educated are more respected by the community and they do not experience difficulty in finance. However, in this study, this relationship does not exist because of the support, acknowledgment and hope given by the parents, family members and the surrounding community when the children are selected to enter boarding schools. It is also because the selection has to undergo a stringent process and the students have to compete to get a place.

In terms of adapting problem that relates to the number of siblings who pursue higher education, it is also found that there is no significant relationship ($r=-.05, p>.05$). The findings of this study reject the findings by Man (1997) which stated that students who do not have siblings furthering studies at a higher level of institution have a higher level of adapting problem than those who have siblings studying at a

higher level of education. The incongruence in findings between this study and Man's (1997) could be due to the fact that students in this study are allowed to bring their hand phones to the hostel as this gadget is now considered as a need by every individual in this global era. This situation is totally different from when Man's (1997) study was conducted. With the permission of hand phone use by the school administration, students who stay in the hostels can keep in touch with their parents easily and frequently.

Finally, the correlation coefficient result showed that there is a low positive significant relationship between adapting problem and the effectiveness of counseling sessions done in schools with the value of $r=.36$, $p<.01$ (Table 1).

Table 1. The relationship between adapting problem and the effectiveness of counseling sessions.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r
Adapting Problem	106	2.19	.27	
Effectiveness of counseling	106	2.19	.90	.36**

** $p<.01$

The finding showed no significant result compared to previous studies could be due to the fact that students are given counseling sessions and thus helped them to adapt with hostel life. The programs that are given are 'mentoring' where the mentor act as the students' parents at the hostel. Any problems that are experienced by the students can be shared with their mentors through meetings that is once every fortnight. According to Jackson, Palepu, Szalacha, Caswell, Carr and Inui (2003), a unique and long-lasting relationship is vital between mentor and mentee. The mentor needs to have wide experience, knowledge and skills as the basis to create a relationship with the mentee (Berk, Berg, Mortimer, Walton-Moss & Yeo, 2005). The mentor mentee arrangement of this school is based on the module prepared by the school administration to ensure the effectiveness of this program.

Besides the mentor mentee program, individual and in-group counseling sessions are also provided to the newly enrolled Form One students. According to Gentry (1973), the counseling approach to cater for psychological problems is a very effective approach. Schetman (1993) stated that therapy which involves smaller groups give a positive effect especially to students who have adapting problem. Hassan (1990) said that group counseling is a way to treat psychological problem which involves interaction between members of the group with the aim of decreasing the symptoms and to solve psychological conflicts and relationships.

In conclusion, the findings of this study showed that students who have adapting problem due to the transition process from childhood to early adolescent and also due to the changing schooling system can be overcome by providing quality and effective counseling sessions so that students can adapt themselves with the new environment quickly. It is believed that the counseling sessions can provide 'mind awareness' to the students and thus will hone their potential and help them solve problems that they experience without being dependent. Besides that, amenity such as easy access of facilities and financial aid provided by the school can help students adapt themselves easily when they stay at the hostel.

Limitation and Suggestions

Among the limitations are, this study used only one boarding school to represent the whole population and thus the result is limited. For future research, interested researchers are advised to use samples from several boarding schools to get more solid findings. Researchers also can use factors such as urban or

outsider or rural as independent variables to measure how far adaptation problem is an issue among Form One students. Other than that, the researchers suggest that the selected samples should come from different backgrounds and from schools of different status such as from daily schools which provide hostels for their students and religious schools which usually provide boarding for their students.

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