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CORRELATION OF STUDY ATTITUDES AND METHODS ON THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE SELECTED COLLEGE STUDENTS

Liezel R. Francisco

University of Rizal System, Pililla, Rizal

liezel.francisco@urs.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT

The research's primary objective was to establish the relationship between the attitudes and methods of the study of college students and college transition that would serve as the basis for a Guidance and Counseling Unit supported intervention program. The analysis used the descriptive approach of research using inferential and qualitative techniques. The two standardized assessments were instruments for data collection: the Study Attitudes and Methods Survey (SAMS) and the College Adjustment Scale (CAS). A validated organized questionnaire was used in the focus group discussion. The 1st and 2nd-semester grades were evaluated. Seventy-five (75) students in the third year, in the 2nd semester, A.Y. 2018-2019, as respondents served. Mean T-scores and Pearson-r were applied for statistical treatment of the results. The research attitudes and methods are significantly associated with college students' anxiety and self-esteem, based on the overall computed results. Thus, the higher the self-esteem, the less the anxiety, the more favorable the students' college transition's attitudes and methods.

INTRODUCTION

Pursuing a college education involves adjustment on the part of the students. Since they are in a transitional period from late adolescence to early adulthood, they experience a wide variety of difficulties in making reasonable college life adjustments. However, each student's type and degree of adjustment may vary depending on background, experience, and prior schooling.

According to Fennie et al. (2020), psychosocial factors are impacting the college adjustment of undergraduate students.¹

Whereas Wang² et al. (2013) stated that college students' research, students' mental health deserves attention, self-management principles have great significance in students' psychological adjustment.

Given this, Crede³ (2012) found out that college adjustment is also shown to be moderately related to individual traits, social support, and students' relationships with their parents. Weaker relationships are evident with demographic variables, prior achievement, coping approaches, and variables that reflect students' psychological independence from their parents.³

Alahmadi⁴ (2019) studied the prevalence of anxiety among college and school students in Saudi Arabia and found out that anxiety was more prevalent among female medical students than male medical students, while anxiety was predominantly observed more among male dental students than female dental students. Thus, a positive correlation exists between depression and anxiety symptom scores. Thereby, facilitating early intervention is needed to prevent anxiety disorder.

American Psychological Association also noted that college students' mental health is a growing concern. A survey found out that anxiety is the top presenting concern among college students.⁵

According to a news article by Bueno⁶ (2018), which was published in the CNN Philippines, university guidance counselors are the helm of multiple awareness programs to promote mental health and prevent disorders in the universities.

As a state university, the University of Rizal System-Pililla Campus is one of the leading external campuses of the University, which provides quality education and training to Pililla and its neighboring towns. The courses offered in this campus are business courses, education, humanities, language and social science courses.⁷

As the Campus Guidance Counselor, counseling records show that from January-March; June-December, in the Calendar Year 2018, there were 112 cases of combined personal and academic problems catered. Thus, the present study would assess the extent of college adjustment based on their intensity issues while in their college studies' progression. As a supposition, the lesser the intensity of the problem, the better the students' adjustment.

The research aimed to ensure that the University is responsive to every unique student's needs by administering, scoring, and interpreting psychological tests, which would serve as bases for addressing their concerns through guidance and counseling services and dealing and meeting the demands of life.

The study results would directly benefit the respondents whom the proposed intervention program would be served as the major output of the study, thus leading to other research that would measure its effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a descriptive research method using inferential and qualitative techniques to study the correlation of the study attitudes and methods on adjusting the selected students of the University of Rizal System Pililla Campus, through the administration of standardized tests, focus group discussion, and documentation analysis. A random sampling method, 40 % of the third-year students from the three colleges, was chosen as participants in the study.

As stated, quantitative descriptive research is a study of status and is widely used in education, nutrition, epidemiology, and the behavioral sciences. Its value is based on the premise that problems can be solved and practices improved through observation, analysis, and description.⁸

After the proposal's approval, as a Registered Psychometrician and Registered Guidance Counselor, the researcher facilitated the purchase of the two needed standardized or psychological tests to a test service provider or qualified distributor.

The gathering tool for quantitative data was the Study Attitudes and Methods Survey (SAMS) developed by William B. Michael, Wayne S. Zimmerman⁹ and the College Adjustment Scale (CAS) by William D. Anton, and James R. Reed.¹⁰ Whereas, the College Adjustment Scale by William D. Anton and James R. Reed is used primarily for counseling purposes, which measures the extent of the academic problem, anxiety, interpersonal issues, depression, career, suicidal ideation, self-esteem, substance abuse, and family problem.

Through a random sampling technique, 40 % of the participants were chosen per college. Permission to set for scheduled dates to administer the two standardized tests was secured. Orientation was done per class, and individual informed consent was secured from the students before group testing. The testing condition was considered, and all testing materials were prepared ahead of time. There were three batches of testing on the same day.

To supplement the data, based on their availability, a series of focus group discussions were held at the Guidance Office. The students were asked to bring their printed copy of grades for the 1st semester and their grades in the 2nd semester to determine their academic performance thru their general weighted average. Due to the Data Privacy Law, academic records cannot be revealed from the Registrar's office. Fortunately, the students were willing to show the individualized printed copy of their grades with an average rating.

The data gathered were tallied, analyzed, and interpreted. The manuscript was made ready for presentation and critique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on documentation analysis, as transpired in the printed grades, the respondents' computed general weighted average is 2.27 with a verbal interpretation of fair.

According to the students, they find their third-year level as the most challenging time of their college years, since they need to take and pass their major subjects together with some minor subjects which are also tough, including research.

It implies that the students' academic performance is in the below-average level. Hence, there is a need for enhancement.

It affirms the view of Mendezabal¹¹ (2013) that student's academic performance occupies a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. It is considered as a key criterion to judge one's total potentialities and capacities.

Table 1: Composite table on the level of the study attitudes and methods of the respondents

Study Attitudes and Methods	Mean	Sd.	VI
Academic Interest	53.67	6.792	H
Academic Drive	47.21	9.841	L
Study Methods	48.14	6.766	L
Study Anxiety	57.07	8.576	H
Manipulation	43.21	7.124	L
Alienation Towards Authority	43.74	9.708	L

Legend: H – High L – Low

Results show that about the study attitudes and methods, on the positive side, the students revealed that they have a high level of academic interest, low level of manipulation, or playing up to the professor to gain favorable treatment; and are not feeling isolated or rejected in the academic environment. On the contrary, the data indicate that the respondents tend to worry too much about their performance, lack self-confidence, lack conformity in meeting institutional requirements; and have low or inconsistent and ineffective study habits and procedures.

It implies that college students have a love of learning, low tendency to manipulative behavior - they are not after special consideration and do not intend to defy school rules and regulations. However, they suffer from inefficient use of study time; have a high tendency to be fearful that one's level of competence in academic endeavors is not high enough in meeting the expectations of their professors and significant others in the academic setting, which affect their level of self-determination to succeed in academic work.

This supports Aquino's¹² (2011) study, who studied study habits and first-year students' attitudes. Accordingly, study habits and study attitudes are both significant variables which determine the academic performance of students.

Similarly, Liu¹³ et al. (2019) mentioned that specific biological, psychological, and environmental factors contribute to depressive symptoms in college students.

Table 2: Composite table on the extent of the college adjustment of the respondents

College Adjustment	Mean	Sd.	VI
Anxiety	72.11	7.519	S
Depression	62.44	6.747	Mo
Suicidal Ideation	59.43	8.493	Mi
Substance Abuse	48.49	7.678	NP
Self-Esteem	63.07	5.352	Mo
Interpersonal Problem	62.57	6.908	Mo
Family Problem	58.54	6.724	Mi
Academic Problem	67.39	6.893	Mo
Career Problem	62.66	5.756	Mo

Legend: S-Severe Mo-Moderate
Mi-Mild NP-No Problem

The table exposed that the college students have experienced the severe intensity of worries or apprehension, while moderate or reasonable adjustment to low mood or despair; dealing with educational matters; boosting self-worth; concerning future

occupations, and mingling with others. Whereas, they have minor issues with suicidal ideation and family disputes. Fortunately, they have no problem with substance abuse.

The present study shows that 4 in 5 college students are affected with moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety; 2 in 5 students are affected with moderate symptoms of depression; 3 in 5 students are affected with moderate academic problems; 3 in 5 students' self-esteem is moderately affected;

Typically, the respondents mentioned that they had experienced nervousness in their oral reports. They are not confident enough to speak straight in English because they are not fluent in the language. They said they need to solicit ideas from others and even pray before their performance in front of the class. Most of their school problems are research works, heavy academic loads, limited time to research or accomplish a specific requirement, time management, nervousness during individual oral report/presentation, money to cover all expenses, expectations of family members and professors and others.

This implies that adjustment to college is a challenge for every student. It is not easy to adjust to college life, especially at the third-year level, since students' mental health is affected by several challenging tasks and roles. Hence, they need assistance from significant others.

This is related to the American Psychological Association; college students' mental health is a growing concern. A survey found out that anxiety is the top presenting concern among college students.⁵

On the other hand, this negates the conclusion of Siew¹⁴ et al. (2019) that many psychology students experience statistics anxiety, which negatively affects academic performance and necessitates applying new methods to understand the underlying nature of statistics anxiety.

It can be gleaned from Table 3, the composite table, that there was a significant correlation on the level of study attitudes and methods concerning academic interest, manipulation, and alienation towards authority on the extent of the college adjustment.

Based on the overall computed data, the study attitudes and methods significantly correlate to the extent of anxiety and self-esteem of the college students. Thus, the higher the self-esteem, the lesser the tension, vice-versa, the more favorable the study attitudes and methods and easier college adjustment.

As mentioned by the respondents in the group discussion, they have experienced nervousness, sleepless nights, and lack of confidence to accomplish all the requirements at a limited time. For them, surviving in a third-year level is an achievement on their endeavor to finish a college degree. They said they are a year closer to their goals.

It implies that college students are suffering from tension and declining self-esteem when they have faced challenges with heavy academic loads, public speaking tasks, research works, coupled with financial scarcity. For some, part-time jobs still interfere with their goal, but they need to earn money to satisfy their needs. The majority of them are already apprehensive of their future, whereas some are still positively coping with their college life condition. Thus, the higher the self-esteem, and the lower the anxiety, the better is the college adjustment process for students.

About their adjustment, responses in the focus group discussion revealed that college life is a holistic process because it involves academic and non-academic tasks and requirements, either expected or unexpected since they are dwelling into more mature

roles. Generally, the third-year level could be the peak of their thriving towards finishing a degree. Their grades are the fruits of their efforts.

Table 3: Composite table on the correlation of study attitudes and methods on the college adjustment of the respondents

Study Attitudes and Methods	College Adjustment	Pearson-r	Sig.	Ho	VI
Academic Interest	Anxiety	.348	.003	R	S
	Depression	.343	.004	R	S
	Suicidal Ideation	.384	.001	R	S
	Substance Abuse	.282	.018	R	S
	Interpersonal Problem	.291	.014	R	S
	Career Problem	.313	.008	R	S
	Total	.407	.000	R	S
Study Anxiety	Anxiety	.278	.020	R	S
	Self-Esteem	-.398	.001	R	S
	Family Problem	-.326	.006	R	S
	Depression	-.243	.043	R	S
	Substance Abuse	-.365	.002	R	S
	Career Problem	-.413	.000	R	S
	Total	-.294	.014	R	S
	Depression	-.317	.007	R	S
	Career Problem	-.308	.010	R	S
Total	-.248	.038	R	S	
Total	Anxiety	.067	.021	R	S
	Self-Esteem	-.248	.039	R	S

It implies that even education is a fundamental right. Because tertiary education is free in state universities and colleges (SUCs), a college student needs to exert extra effort to pass. Surviving in college is not simple. Every student needs to cope and then eventually thrive to fulfill his or her dreams.

This confirms Kurt Goldstein's Organismic Theory of Personality, which states that the key to the typical personality lies in its unity, consistency, and organization; in contrast, the pathological personality is fragmented and disorganized. The unity that resides in any particular individual can only be appreciated and understood by seeing every aspect of his functioning together: his performances (conscious, voluntary activities); his attitudes, feelings, inner experiences; and the way his body functions.¹⁵

Qualitative data confirm that student-respondents have good intentions or motives in their college studies since they share a common goal- to finish college and earn a degree. However, based on the records, only a few of them are doing well in their academics. In contrast, others seem to be not so severe, especially on reading tasks, punctual coming to school, making mañana habit, and suffering from cramming behavior on beating deadlines.

It implies that the majority of them are not systematic in their study methods and attitudinal problems arise. Typically, they suffer from inefficient use of study time, lack self-determination, and easily get disappointed or frustrated with having not-so-desirable grades.

It is related to the study of Sarwar¹⁶ et al. (2010), that high-achieving students had a more positive attitude towards study in that they detected and reacted positively to the favorable aspects of the situation they found themselves in, while the low-achieving students tended to be fault-finders, responding to the negative aspects of study such as

distractions and minor annoyances. The high-achieving students found tertiary work an interesting challenge.

As mentioned by the respondents, they have generally experienced several difficulties at home, school, and even work. Most are academic-related and economical as well. Accordingly, time-management, research works, and oral reports or presentations are top of their concerns. Those problems served as either barriers or challenges for them to keep on holding to their dreams.

It implies that problems served as either barriers or challenges. When those barriers or challenges are getting tough, they need to adjust to adapt to the school environment as a training ground to deal with the real world outside the academe; otherwise, they would fail or feel anxious.

According to Rosenberg¹⁷ (2018), research shows that nearly 1 in 5 university students are affected by anxiety or depression. He added that mental health reports that anxiety and even depression are the top reasons college students seek counseling.

Likewise, Montgomery¹⁸ et al. (2019) mentioned that motivation contributed to a significant amount of variance in predicting academic adjustment. The examined predictor variables explained a significant amount of additional variance above that of motivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the significant findings, the researcher recommended the following:

1. A College Life Adjustment Program for those students experiencing anxiety, declining self-esteem, and poor study methods should be sponsored by the Guidance and Counseling Unit. Personality enhancement on effective study attitudes and methods, boosting self-esteem, strengthening one's memory, time-management, enjoying reading as a hobby, battling public speaking phobia, and others will be done. Eclectic counseling sessions using emotion-focused and solution-focused will be integrated.
2. Counseling referral system should be strengthened.
3. A parallel study using a university-wide sample or representatives may be conducted to verify the results.

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