



Bridging the Transition: Examining College Adaptation Through Academic, Social, Personal and Institutional Attachment Factors

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Abstract

This study examined the level of college adaptation among students at Apayao State College, focusing on academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment dimensions. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational design, the research involved 3,648 students across 13 academic programs. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) was employed to assess adaptation levels, revealing that a significant proportion of students struggle with personal-emotional adjustment (74.6%) and institutional attachment (49.3%). Additionally, 35.6% of students reported difficulties in social integration, while 20.8% faced academic challenges. The findings indicate that emotional distress, social isolation, and weak institutional affiliation negatively impact student adaptation. These results highlight the urgent need for academic support services, mental health interventions, peer mentorship programs, and student engagement initiatives to enhance college adaptation. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive institutional strategies can improve student well-being, retention, and academic success, ultimately fostering a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Keywords: *level of college adaption, personal adjustment, emotional adjustment, academic adjustment*

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Introduction

The transition from high school to college presents significant challenges for students as they navigate new academic, social, and personal environments. College adaptation is a crucial factor in determining a student's success and well-being in higher education. Effective adaptation enhances academic performance, fosters social integration, and strengthens students' connection to their institution. However, many students struggle with



this transition, experiencing difficulties in adjusting to academic demands, building social relationships, managing personal changes, and developing a sense of belonging within their college community.

Understanding the different dimensions of college adaptation, academic, social, personal, and institutional attachment, is essential for identifying factors that support or hinder student success. The **Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)** provides a comprehensive framework for assessing these aspects, allowing educators and policymakers to design targeted interventions that promote student retention and overall well-being.

College adaptation plays a vital role in determining students' academic success, personal growth, and overall well-being. According to Baker and Siryk (1984), adaptation to college is a multidimensional process that involves academic, social, and personal adjustment, as well as attachment to the institution. The ability of students to transition effectively into college life has been linked to increased retention rates, academic performance, and emotional well-being (Credé & Niehorster, 2012).

Academic adjustment refers to students' ability to meet the intellectual demands of college coursework, manage time effectively, and develop appropriate study habits. Research by Tinto (1993) emphasizes that academic integration is a key predictor of student retention, as those who struggle academically are more likely to disengage from their studies. Furthermore, Kuh et al. (2008) suggest that students who actively engage in learning communities and seek academic support services are more likely to succeed in higher education. However, students who experience difficulties in adapting to college-level coursework often report higher levels of stress and anxiety (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003).

Social integration is another critical aspect of college adaptation. Schlossberg's (1989) Transition Theory highlights the importance of developing supportive peer relationships and engaging in campus activities to foster a sense of belonging. Students who form strong social networks are more likely to experience positive college experiences and demonstrate resilience in overcoming challenges (Astin, 1999). On the other hand, studies indicate that students who struggle with social adaptation, particularly first-generation college students, may feel isolated and disconnected from the college community (Stephens et al., 2012).

Personal adjustment encompasses emotional regulation, independence, and coping strategies for handling the pressures of college life. Research by Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, and Majeski (2004) suggests that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of personal adjustment, with students who possess strong self-awareness and emotional regulation skills experiencing lower levels of stress and greater overall satisfaction with their college experience. Additionally, counseling services and mental health resources have been identified as critical support systems for students facing personal adjustment challenges (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009).

Institutional attachment refers to students' sense of connection and commitment to their college or university. Bean and Metzner (1985) propose that students who feel a strong sense of institutional belonging are more likely to persist in their studies and complete their



degrees. A study by Strayhorn (2018) highlights that engagement with faculty, participation in campus organizations, and institutional support services contribute significantly to students' attachment to their institution. Conversely, students who lack institutional attachment are at a higher risk of dropping out or transferring to other schools.

Despite extensive research on college transition, gaps remain in understanding how students' adaptation levels vary across different contexts, institutions, and student demographics. Many existing studies focus primarily on academic challenges, overlooking the equally critical aspects of social and emotional adjustment. Additionally, there is limited research on how institutional attachment influences students' long-term engagement and persistence in higher education.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the level of college adaptation among students using the SACQ, specifically focusing on academic, social, and personal adjustment, as well as institutional attachment. The findings will provide valuable insights into the challenges students face and inform strategies to enhance their overall college experience.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the level of College Adaptation of the students as revealed by the Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire in terms of:
 - 1.1. academic adjustment,
 - 1.2. social adjustment,
 - 1.3. personal adjustment,
 - 1.4. attachment to the institution?

Research Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship between students' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, mental health status, and college adaptation levels (Calderon & Gonzales, 1993). Conducted at Apayao State College's main campus in Conner and its satellite campus in Luna, the research involved 3,648 students enrolled in 13 academic programs under SUC Level 2 accreditation. To assess student adaptation, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker & Siryk, 1984) was employed, measuring academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment dimensions. The 52-item questionnaire, rated on a 9-point scale, demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92-0.94$) and validity.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed to ensure the protection and well-being of participants. Students were informed about the study's objectives, potential risks, and their right to voluntary participation and withdrawal without consequences. Informed consent was obtained before data collection, and all personal information was kept confidential and anonymized to safeguard privacy. The research adhered to institutional ethical guidelines and was approved by relevant authorities.



Data analysis was conducted by a qualified psychometrician, utilizing means, percentages, and frequency counts to examine student profiles. The findings of this study aim to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing student adaptation to college and to inform strategies that enhance student well-being and academic success.

Results and Findings

Table 1. Respondents' Level of College Adaptation in terms of Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Personal Adjustment, and Attachment to Institution.

Dime nsion	Abo ve Aver age	Aver age	Below Avera ge	Me an (S D)	Descripti ve Interpret ation
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)		
ACA D	18 (2.1)	657 (77.1)	177 (20.8)	45. 39 8	BELOW AVERA GE
SOCI AL	14 (1.6)	535 (62.8)	303 (35.6)	43. 25 5	BELOW AVERA GE
PER- EMO	3 (0.4)	213 (25.0)	636 (74.6)	38. 50 1	LOW
ATT ACH	2 (0.2)	430 (50.5)	420 (49.3)	41. 25 9	BELOW AVERA GE
FULL SCAL E	7 (0.8)	303 (35.6)	542 (63.6)	38. 77 6	LOW

Legend:

ACAD-Academic Adjustment; SOCIAL-Social Adjustment; PER-EMO-Personal-Emotional Adjustment; ATTACH-Attachment to Institution
Very High ACAD ≥ 80 ; High ACAD 70-79; Above Average ACAD 60-69; Average ACAD 50-59; Below Average ACAD 40-49; Low ACAD ≤ 39
Very High SOCIAL ≥ 80 ; High SOCIAL 70-79; Above Average SOCIAL 60-69; Average SOCIAL 50-59; Below Average SOCIAL 40-49; Low SOCIAL ≤ 39
Very High PER-EMO ≥ 80 ; High PER-EMO 70-79; Above Average PER-EMO 60-69; Average PER-EMO 50-59; Below Average PER-EMO 40-49; Low PER-EMO ≤ 39



Table 1 presents the results regarding the participants' level of college adaptation in terms of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal adjustment, and attachment to the institution.

Based on the available data, it is evident that a significant proportion of students achieved scores within the average range across all aspects. Nevertheless, a significant portion of individuals encountered subpar adaptation across various domains. In the context of academia, it is noteworthy that a mere 2.1% of students achieved scores that exceeded the norm, while a significant majority of 77.1% obtained scores within the usual range. Conversely, 20.8% of students performed below the average level. This finding suggests that a significant proportion of students are encountering difficulties in adapting to the academic environment. Furthermore, this illustrates that students are expending a significant amount of energy to achieve their academic goals, yet they are facing obstacles in the process. Although they may encounter occasional obstacles with their coursework, deadlines, or concentration, these challenges do not greatly impede their performance. Furthermore, they do not substantially impede their performance.

Concerning social adaptation, it was found that 1.6% of the student population achieved scores that exceeded the norm, while the majority, namely 62.8%, obtained scores within the typical range. Conversely, 35.6% of the students scored below the average in terms of social adaptation. This observation indicates that a considerable percentage of students encounter difficulties in their process of social integration inside the collegiate setting. This means that it is a frequent occurrence for students to encounter challenges in both their personal and social spheres. While individuals may possess a limited circle of acquaintances, they may encounter challenges when attempting to integrate into larger social circles, leading to occasional feelings of isolation and a dearth of assistance. They may have a limited social circle.

Regarding personal-emotional adaptability, a mere 0.4% of students demonstrated scores above the norm, while 25.0% fell within the typical range, and a majority of 74.6% exhibited scores below the average. This finding suggests that a considerable proportion of students encounter diminished personal-emotional well-being, which may have implications for their whole collegiate journey. This means that students are experiencing significant emotional distress. They may frequently feel anxious, depressed, overwhelmed, or unable to cope with the demands of college life. They might have poor self-esteem, experience severe homesickness, and find it difficult to manage their emotions effectively.

Within the state of attachment, it was seen that a mere 0.2% of students achieved scores that were beyond the average, while a significant majority of 50.5% fell within the typical range. Conversely, a notable 49.3% of students obtained scores that were below the average. This means that students exhibit a limited sense of connection or loyalty to their institution. They may exhibit apathy towards the college, express certain critiques, and lack a strong sense of affiliation or allegiance. This implies that a considerable proportion of students can encounter difficulties in establishing a robust affiliation with the institution or cultivating a feeling of inclusion.

The examination of the full-scale adaptation measure indicated that a mere 0.8% of students achieved scores surpassing the mean, while 35.6% fell within the average range,



and the majority(63.6%) had scores below the mean. Students encounter substantial difficulties in adapting to college life in various aspects. They face difficulties in their academic performance, and social interactions, and lack a sense of connection to the institution. This could have a significant influence on their overall welfare and achievement in college.

Discussion

The findings presented in Table 1 highlight critical insights into students' levels of adaptation to college in terms of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment to the institution. While a majority of students fall within the average range, a considerable portion struggles with adaptation, particularly in personal-emotional well-being and institutional attachment. These challenges suggest the need for targeted interventions to support students in adjusting to the demands of college life.

Academic Adjustment

The data reveal that only 2.1% of students demonstrated above-average academic adjustment, while 77.1% fell within the average range, and 20.8% scored below average. This indicates that a significant number of students grapple with academic challenges, such as adapting to coursework demands, maintaining focus, and managing deadlines. While they may be making efforts to cope, these struggles suggest that academic engagement and preparedness may not be optimal. The presence of below-average academic adjustment among one-fifth of students underscores the necessity of academic support programs that can help enhance study habits, time management skills, and overall academic performance.

Social Adjustment

The results also indicate that only 1.6% of students exhibited above-average social adjustment, with 62.8% within the typical range and 35.6% scoring below average. This suggests that while most students manage to navigate their social environment moderately well, a substantial portion encounters difficulties in forming relationships, engaging in peer interactions, and establishing a sense of social belonging. Students who scored below average in social adjustment may struggle with communication skills, participation in group activities, or forming friendships beyond their immediate acquaintances. Such difficulties can lead to isolation and limited peer support, which may in turn affect academic motivation and emotional well-being.

Personal-Emotional Adjustment

Among all dimensions, personal-emotional adjustment posed the greatest challenge for students. Only 0.4% of students achieved above-average scores, 25.0% fell within the typical range, while a striking 74.6% scored below average. This signifies that a vast majority of students experience emotional distress, anxiety, and difficulty managing stress related to academic and social pressures. Students struggling with personal-emotional adaptation may face low self-esteem, persistent homesickness, and feelings of being overwhelmed by their new environment. These issues can be detrimental to overall well-being, potentially leading to academic disengagement, mental health concerns, and



withdrawal from social interactions. The high percentage of students struggling in this area calls for stronger mental health support, counseling services, and emotional well-being initiatives within the institution.

Attachment to Institution

Institutional attachment levels were also relatively low, with only 0.2% of students demonstrating above-average attachment, 50.5% within the average range, and 49.3% below average. This suggests that nearly half of the student population lacks a strong sense of belonging or loyalty to the institution. These students may feel detached from the college community, display low engagement in campus activities, or express dissatisfaction with institutional services. A weak sense of attachment can impact students' retention, motivation, and overall academic persistence, making it essential for the institution to implement strategies that foster a stronger connection between students and the campus environment.

College Adaptation

The full-scale adaptation measure reveals that only 0.8% of students demonstrated above-average adaptation, while 35.6% fell within the typical range, and 63.6% scored below average. These findings indicate that the majority of students struggle with multiple aspects of college adaptation, particularly in personal-emotional well-being, social integration, and institutional attachment. The combined effect of these challenges can lead to academic underperformance, social withdrawal, and increased psychological distress. Addressing these concerns requires a holistic approach, including enhanced academic support, peer mentoring programs, accessible counseling services, and student engagement initiatives.

The findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions aimed at improving students' overall adjustment to college life. Universities must prioritize programs that enhance academic skills, promote social interaction, support emotional resilience, and strengthen institutional engagement. Failure to address these adaptation challenges may result in higher dropout rates, increased academic struggles, and a diminished college experience for students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight significant challenges in students' adaptation to college life at Apayao State College, particularly in the areas of personal-emotional well-being and institutional attachment. While a majority of students demonstrate an average level of adjustment, a substantial proportion struggle in key aspects of academic, social, emotional, and institutional adaptation. Academically, 20.8% of students face difficulties in managing coursework, deadlines, and study demands, indicating the need for targeted academic support programs such as tutoring services, study skills workshops, and time management training. Socially, 35.6% of students experience challenges in forming relationships and integrating into the campus community, which can lead to isolation and a lack of peer



support. To address this, universities should implement peer mentorship programs, student engagement initiatives, and social activities that foster a more inclusive environment.

The most concerning issue is personal-emotional adjustment, where 74.6% of students report significant emotional distress, including anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem. These struggles can lead to academic disengagement and withdrawal from social interactions. Strengthening mental health resources, providing accessible counseling services, and offering stress management programs are crucial interventions to support students' well-being. Additionally, institutional attachment remains a challenge, with 49.3% of students expressing a weak sense of connection to the college. This lack of affiliation can impact motivation, retention, and overall satisfaction with their educational experience. To strengthen students' sense of belonging, institutions must improve student-faculty relationships, enhance campus facilities, and create more opportunities for meaningful student involvement.

Overall, the study underscores the need for a holistic and proactive approach to college adaptation. Addressing academic, social, emotional, and institutional difficulties is essential to ensuring student success and well-being. Institutions should implement comprehensive support systems, including academic coaching, peer support networks, mental health interventions, and campus-wide engagement programs, to facilitate a smoother transition for students. A well-supported student is more likely to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. By recognizing and addressing these adaptation challenges, Apayao State College and similar institutions can create a more inclusive, resilient, and successful student community.

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