

Social and Academic Support and Adaptation to College: Exploring the Relationships between Indicators' College Students

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Received: May 31, 2016

Accepted: July 5, 2016

Online Published: November 24, 2016

doi:10.5539/ies.v9n12p53

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n12p53>

Abstract

The aim of this study was to demonstrate the relation between social and academic support on student ability to adapt to college. Results demonstrated a weak and reverse relation between expression of support and personal ability to adapt and total adaptation. A direct relation was determined between emotional support and social adaptation and dependence adaptation; a direct relation was determined between socializing and social adaptation and total adaptation; a direct relation was determined between practical support and social and dependence adaptation, among a various types of academic support, expression of support predicted student ability to adapt to university, as well as a variety of social support, socialization predicted student ability to adapt to university.

Keywords: social support, academic support, ability to adapt to college, student

1. Introduction

Social support, as a mechanism to manage emotions, social support can have a powerful impact on quality of life. Social protection is a term that describes affection, attention and assistance by which people support one another, within families and among other social networks. Social support promotes the self-esteem that is essential for new experiences (Asgari & Nakl-Zadeh, 2011). Social support improves peoples' lives but understanding that there is support is considered much more important than the actual support received. In other words, student understanding and attitude toward the support they receive is considered far more important than actual provision of support. The concept of perceived social support acknowledges that not all relations between individuals facilitate the means for social support. In other words, relationships are only considered a source of social support if a person perceives that it satisfies their needs. There is evidence suggesting that action or timing of an offer of help can sometimes be inappropriate. Therefore, a person's perception of help can be more important than the support itself. Scales of perceived social support are concentrated on cognitive assessment of an individual from his environment and his level of confidence in the problem for which help and support is available if it becomes necessary (Michaeli, Mokhtarpourhabashy, & Meisami, 2013).

Research findings show that perceived social support can prevent the physiological side effects of illness and increase self-esteem and confidence and have a positive impact on physical, mental and social situations (Lee, Yae, Boog, & Hong, 2004). The support that a student receives from his professors and teachers is an interaction that can affect the way a student adapts to a university experience. Jones (2008) showed how relationships between students and teachers impacts on the opinions they might develop about the university.

Support outside the classroom has various benefits for students, but most students communicate with their teachers in a classroom setting. Interaction between students and teachers is not considered in support provisions outside a classroom setting. In class interactions are more common among those who do not have the required motivation to communicate beyond the setting of the classroom. Class communication between students and teachers determines whether or not a person is willing to communicate with his/her teacher outside of the class setting and if so, what would be the nature of that student/teacher relationship outside the classroom? Thus, researchers have investigated other methods of communication that teachers apply to support their students (Bejrano, 2014). Studies on teacher confirmation have shown that this helps students adapt to university both

academically and emotionally. Ellis (2000) concluded that confirmation by a teacher had a strong impact on student cognitive ability and the effectiveness of student learning.

Thompson and Maser (2009) shows that academic support promotes adaptive aspects of education in the following ways: Firstly, by helping each other in class with educational and strategies of class preparation, students can ease each other's path to adapt to an academic environment. In the research of Thompson and Maser, students encouraged each other to study, helped each other with homework, worked together to solve problems and shared related classroom experiences. Secondly, students helped their friends in social adaptation by being more friendly and providing a support network at university. Students emphasized the importance of teamwork in helping each other to create a support network. Thirdly, students helped each other to adapt personally and emotionally. This was achieved by raising each other's self-esteem; raising levels of trust between students and by sharing problems and inconveniences. Finally, students created new positive experiences within a university setting and thereby helped their friends to get established in the education environment. Students expressed that motivated people liked having a support group because "these motivated people help to make a strong academic environment inside and outside the classroom." Therefore, a student with classmates that are also his friends may get a sense of belonging to of that educational institution (Bejerano, 2014).

Schrodt et al. (2009) determined that confirmation from a teacher depends directly and indirectly on a student opinion about that teacher's credibility and his personal assessment of a teacher. These studies show that when teachers expressed positive behavior it had a positive effect on students' opinions and feelings about their education and feelings about themselves and thus they adapted more easily to their education. Results reported in Jones (2008) suggest that students were very enthusiastic and happy to learn from teachers who offered high-level support outside the class setting and that this process will be reduced in teachers who only offer limited support to students and teachers who provided no support. Jones concluded that teachers who provided support outside the class setting helped their students to cope with the stresses involved in academic life. Results of Jones also revealed that support gives value and credit to students and encourages them not to give up; thus helping students adapt to an academic environment. Teachers were considered as the most valuable resource for students through provision of valuable tips for dealing with difficult circumstances. Regarding social support and adaptation, other research studies on the subject are as follows; Salvia, Italian and Limonene (2003), White and Hastings (2004) and Cecilia and Belgrade (2007). These mentioned research papers highlighted a significant relation between social support and ability to adapt. In addition, other research demonstrates that social support had a positive effect on ability to adapt (Holland & Holahan, 2003, Brambli, Davidson, & Emerson, 2004). Tao, Dong, Pratt, Pancer, and Hunsberger (2000) suggest that social support had a close relation with social adaptation. Davidson et al. (2005) investigated the relation between observed social support and adaptation behavior of youth and concluded a significant relation between social support and adaptive behavior among students (Khaksar-Beldaji, & Khodapanahi, 2006). Wallace (2001) investigated the relation between education achievement, learned helplessness and psychological adaptation and concluded that there was a link between successful education and psychological adaptation and that boys did better than girls in terms of psychological adaptation. King (1999) showed that boys ranked better than girls in terms of having a positive attitude to life and feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life. The results of Loieng (1997) proved that in the entire and social adaptation, in terms of gender showed no significant difference. Ranchor, Bouma, and Sandrmn (1996) reported that social support had a positive relation with health and thus, increased a person's ability to deal with anxiety and stress. Researchers have also agreed that social support protected a person from stress and anxiety.

In general, it can be said that socialization is a process of bilateral communication between society and an individual and that this process continues in the two categories of learning and teaching over the course of a lifetime and that social adaptation takes place as part of this process. Furthermore, concepts of adaptation and social adaptation are relative and variable from one society to another according to culture and beliefs. For example, in a Muslim country some behavior may be considered compatible but could be quite incompatible in another. Therefore, adaptation and being in harmony with the surrounding environment is a vital for every living being and every human being makes a conscious or unconscious effort to meet his diverse and sometimes conflicting needs in the environment in which he or she lives (Azin & Mousavi, 2012).

The purpose of adaptation is to establish a psychologically satisfying relationship to one's environment and this is understood as individual's responses that effect harmonic adaptation to a situation or set of circumstances. Therefore, achieving a desired level of adaptation in different areas will meets the demands and needs and desires and for realizing an individual's potential (Brghandan, 2013). To become compatible with an environment and in harmony with oneself and one's surroundings is vital for every living being and every human being tries consciously or unconsciously to meet diverse and sometimes, conflicting demands of their

environment (Azin & Mousavi, 2012).

Adopting appropriate exposure practice can help a person to adapt. Confronting a situation involves a series of cognitive and behavioral strategies that can be applied by a person to manage in stressful and difficult situations (Folkman & Moscovetiz, 2004). Personality traits have a great effect on the way people adapt to an environment. Moormi (2002) concluded that parenting style of single-parent children had no direct relation with their children's emotional and social ability to adapt while factors such as other types of social support and a child's intelligence, may have a role in offsetting the effects of a mother's absence of personal-social adaptation and their character. Soda, in his background review, questions the environment and the future. Student's social adaptation is also affected by academic and non-academic factors; in particular, research has shown that social acceptance by teachers and classmates leads to different compatible outcomes in this the period (Mercer, 2008).

Having the ability to adapt is a characteristic that enables an organism to survive and reproduce meaning that such characteristics are better designed in some environment compared to others? Any change in human life, pleasant or unpleasant, requires some readjustment (Hosseinian et al., 2007). A student environment, as a modernization process and due to fundamental differences with the family environment, causes changes in the morale of students and affects a person's power to adapt; this is also affected by the university environment. As noted, social and academic student support had a positive impact on student ability to adapt and on a student's future success, and in many cases this played a decisive role in a student's achievement in education and socialization. Therefore, considering the importance of student social and academic support and its important role in education, this study considered that research was necessary in this area so the role of social support and academic support was investigated in student ability to adapt to University.

1.1 Research Questions

- 1) Is there a relationship between student academic support and their ability to adapt to college?
- 2) Is there a relationship between student social support and their ability to adapt to college?
- 3) Is the range of academic student support facilities for university students able to predict their ability to adapt to college?
- 4) Is the range of student social support at university able to predict their ability to adapt to college?

2. Method

This study applied a descriptive methodology with a correlated approach. The target population in the study included all students of Azad University in Zahedan in the year of 2016-2015. The above students were categorized into three groups; Human Science, Basic Science and Technical and Engineering; there was a total of 8300 people and the statistical population of 368 people was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan's Table (1970). Details of the sample population are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample population (N = 368)

		F	%
Gender	Male	197	53.5
	Female	171	46.5
Age	>21	120	32.6
	21-24	112	30.4
	<24	136	37
Field of Study	Human Sciences	266	72.3
	Basic Sciences	39	10.6
	Technical and Engineering	63	17.1
Educational Level	Bachelor D.	232	63
	Master D.	136	37

The following questionnaires were used to collect data:

- 1) Student academic support scale of Thompson and Mazer (2009) had 15 items in four sub-components: a)

information, items 1 to 7, b) esteem items 8 to 10, c) motivation items 11 to 13, d) expression, items 14 and 15.

Responses to the items of this questionnaire were recorded as a scale of options ranging from 1-5, from not at all = 1 to every day = 5.

2) Social support was evaluated according to the behavior scale of Vaux, Riede and Stewart (1987). The mentioned questionnaire had 35 items in four sub-components: a) emotional support, items 1 to 9, b) socialization, items 10 to 14: c) application assistants (practical), items 15 to 24: d) advice and guidance, items 25 to 35.

Responses to items of this questionnaire were set in the range of five options from do not let anyone =1 to most of the family members do it = 5.

3) Student ability to adapt to the college a) scientific adaptation, items 1 to 5: b) social adaptation, items 6 to 11: c) personal and emotional adaptation, items 12 to 16: d) affiliation, items 17 to 21.

Responses to the items of this questionnaire were set in a range of five options from completely false = 1 to quite right = 5.

Cronbach's alpha test was used to compare reliability; calculated values were noted in the table below.

Table 2. The main questionnaire components and their reliability coefficient

Questionnaires	Number of items	α
Academic Support	15	0.89
Social Support	35	0.94
adaptation to college	21	0.78

In this study research data was analyzed according to inferential statistics such as the Pearson correlation test, analysis of variance and stepwise regression. It should be noted that all the statistical calculations were conducted with SPSS, version 19, software.

3. Results

Is there a relationship between academic student support and their ability to adapt to college?

Table 3. Academic student support and their ability to adapt to college (N = 380)

		Academy Adaptation	Social Adaptation	Personal Adaptation	Dependence Adaptation	Adaptation (Total)
Informational Support	r	-.084	-.012	.017	-.059	-.044
Esteem Support	r	-.056	.035	-.025	.021	-.008
Motivational Support	r	-.053	-.012	-.084	-.014	-.065
Venting Support	r	-.108*	.038	-.123*	-.102*	-.120*
Academic Support (Total)	r	-.092	.008	-.043	-.047	-.064

* $P < .05$.

As seen in Table 3, among the different types of academic support, there was a significant and inverse – although insignificant difference- between expressing support and scientific, personal adaptation and student dependency with the university and the same adaptation ($p < .05$). There was no statistically significant difference determined between the other items.

Is there a relationship between social support and student ability to adapt to college?

Table 4. Social support and student ability to adapt to college (N = 380)

		Academic adaptation	Social adaptation	Personal adaptation	Dependence adaptation	Adaptation (Total)
Emotional Support	r	-.085	.191**	-.013	.133*	.084
Socialization	r	-.067	.269**	.024	.093	.116*
Practical Support	r	-.052	.168**	.027	.120*	.100
Consultation and Guidance	r	-.158**	.168**	.010	.032	.026
Social Support (Total)	r	-.115*	.224**	.013	.105*	.088

*P<.05; **P<.01

As can be seen in Table 4, except for a significant relation between emotional support and social adaptation ($r = .191$) and dependency ($r = .133$) and socialization with social adaptation ($r = .269$) and total adaptation ($r = .116$), consulting and guidance with scientific adaptation ($r = -.158$) and social adaptation ($r = .168$), and total social support with scientific adaptation ($r = .115$) and social adaptation ($r = .244$), there was no statistical significant relation determined between the other components.

Is a variety of academic support at university able to predict student ability to adapt to college?

Table 5. Prediction regression of students' adaptation by a variety of academic supports (N = 380)

Step	Independent variable	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	R ² Change	B	t	Sig.
1	Discharge Support	.120	.014	.012	.014		53.862	.000
						-.120	-2.311	.021

Stepwise regression was used to predict student ability to adapt to university by a range of types of academic support. At this stage, discharge was the most anticipated from student ability to adapt to university, results are shown in the table above. These results show, that expressing support could predict 12 percent student ability to adapt to university. In addition, according to the obtained t 2.31 and the significant degree of 0.05, the model was successful at the level of 0.95. In other words, it was determined with 95% confidence that only the variable of expression of support was determined as significant model.

Is the variety of type of social support at university able to predict student ability to adapt to college?

Table 6. Prediction regression of students' adaptation by a variety of social supports (N = 380)

Step	Independent variable	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	R ² Change	B	t	Sig.
1	Socialization	.116 ^a	.013	.011	.013		26.728	.000
						.116	2.235	.026

Stepwise regression was used to predict student adaptation to university by a variety of types of social support. At this stage, socialization was the most anticipated type of support for student ability to adapt to university; results are shown in the table above. Results show that socialization predicted 11 percent of student ability to adapt to university. In addition, according to the obtained result of t 2.24 and the significant degree of 0.05, success of this model was confirmed at the level of 0.95. In other words, it can be determined at 95% confidence level that only the variable of socialization was determined as significant in the model.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In relation to the first research question "Is there a relation between student academic support and type of support in terms of a student's compatibility with the university?" Results show an inverse and weak relationship between venting support and personal adaptation and consistency. The results of this study were aligned to those reported in Rahimi-Nejad et al. (2014), on the relation between Shahed students' perceptions of the educational atmosphere, their personal and family characteristics with social adaptation showed that the students' satisfaction

of Shahed share, other students' positive opinion to Shahed students, the teachers' dealing and Shahed students marriage that are predictors of Shahed students' social adaptation. The results of Thomson and colleagues (2009) and Wallace's Research (2001), indicate that the relation between educational achievement and with psychological adaptation, as well as the research results of Gharagozlou, Rahimi-nejad, and Rezazadeh (2009) showed a direct and significant positive relationship between adaptation and social support, results align with those of this current research.

In relation to the second research question "Is there a relation between a student social support and type of support with student compatibility to university?" Results show a direct relation between emotional support with social and dependent adaptation, a direct relation between socialization and social and total adaptation, a direct relation between practical support with social and dependent adaptation and a direct relation between consultation and guidance with social adaptation, as well as a direct relation between total support and social adaptation. However, an inverse relation was determined between consultation and guidance with scientific adaptation and total support with scientific adaptation. These results align with those reported in Khoshkonesh et al. (2011), entitled *The role of fundamental needs and social support in high school students' social adaptation* show a direct relation between social support and student ability for social adaptation. Other studies on social support and adaptation are those of Saloviita, Italianna, and Leinonen (2003), White and Hastings (2004) and Sisilia and Bulgery (2007). The mentioned researches demonstrate a significant relation between social support and adaptation. Other research has also shown that social support had a positive effect on adaptation (Holland & Holahan, 2003; Brambli, Davidson, & Emerson, 2004). Tao, Dong, Pratt, Pansr, and Hansbergur (2000) also suggest that social support had a close relation with social adaptation. Davidson et al. (2005) reports on the relation between observed social support and adaptation behavior of young people and concludes that the relation between social support and student behavior showing compatibility behaviors was significant. Results of these mentioned researches are aligned with results of this research.

In relation to the third research question, "Could a variety of type of academic support predict their student ability to adapt to university?" Results show that among the components of academic support, expressing support predicted student adaptation to university. The results of this study, as well as those reported in Wright (2012) show that students helped each other through emotional support, easy job support and academic support to adapt to university and these forms of support confronted the stress of transition to university.

In relation to the fourth research question, "Could a variety of types of social support predict student ability to adapt to university?" Results show that only socialization was able to predict student ability to adapt to university.

In summary, the results of this study on the current statistical population can be stated as follows:

- There was a weak and inverse relation determined between expressing support and personal ability to adapt and total adaptation.
- There was a direct relation determined between emotional support with social and dependent adaptation; a direct relation between socialization with social and total adaptation; a direct relation between practical support with social and dependent adaptation and a direct relation between consultation and guidance with social adaptation as well as a direct relation between total support and social adaptation.
- There was an inverse relation determined between coping strategies and scientific adaptation.
- Among the components of academic support, expressing support predicted student ability to adapt to university.
- None of the above components of social support were able to predict student ability to adapt to university.

According to results of the first research question, there was no relation between academic support and student ability to adapt to university and recommendations are as follows

- 1) Elite students and those with a low-income should be sponsored by the by University.
- 2) Interest-free loans should be granted for students in higher education.

According to these results of the second research question showing a direct relation between social support and adaptation, it is recommended that:

- 1) Social and religious counseling sessions be conducted for students to raise student awareness and decision-making ability.
- 2) Creation of an intimate atmosphere between students and officials in order to solve students' issues more

easily.

According to the results of the fourth research question demonstrating that among the components of academic support, expressing support predicted student ability to adapt to university, it is suggested that:

- 1) Special academic support is provided for students.
- 2) Consultation with students is given high priority.

According to results of the fifth research question, none of the social support components were able to predict student ability to adapt to university, it is suggested that:

- 1) More attention is paid to students' needs.
- 2) Plans for the future should be made for students.

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