

Freshmen Students' Self-Esteem and Adjustment to College in Higher Education Institutions in Calapan City, Philippines

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Abstract –*The study determined the relationship between self-esteem and freshmen students' adjustment to college in Higher Education Institutions in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. The descriptive correlational and comparative research methods were used in the study. The questionnaires were distributed to 357 freshmen students from selected HEIs. The study determined the relationship between self-esteem and freshmen students' adjustment to college in Higher Education Institutions in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. The descriptive correlational and comparative research methods were used in the study. The questionnaires were distributed to 357 freshmen students from selected HEIs. The study found out that the respondents had high self-esteem and high level of adjustment to college; the two variables have a positive correlation. It is recommended that there should be sequential institutional and classroom activities that encourage adjustment of new students and the development of their self-esteem.*

Keywords –*self-esteem, students' adjustment, freshmen students, HEIs, Calapan City*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is known to be the stage between childhood and adulthood – a time when a person has already outgrown his childish ways yet not fully matured enough to be considered as an adult. It is the time of an individual's life when he starts learning his own self. According to Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, the main developmental task that the individual in this period has his focus is on the achievement of his identity. Other tasks include overcoming childish attitude and behavior patterns, and holistic preparation for adulthood, acquiring a set of values to believe and to guide behavior, and becoming self-sufficient [1].

Because adolescence is the period of change – physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and psychologically, the person's self-esteem usually alters. Self-esteem can be defined as one's evaluation of one's worth as a person based on an assessment of the qualities that make up the self-concept. Literature presents different domains of self-esteem. With all the definition and domains available, self-esteem can be deemed as high when one feels good about the domains he believes is important for himself. It is even considered that people with high self-esteem are satisfied with the type of person they are [2].

Self-esteem may be considered one of the popular topics of researchers since it has already been correlated and tested with different psychological and sociological factors. This may be because self-esteem says a lot about the person's core, a psychological construct that give glimpse to what is within. Different psychological and sociological literature presents how self-esteem can affect a person's performance. A multidimensional model made by Harter presents that different facets contribute to the overall self-esteem of a person. Her model consists of Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance and Behavioral Conduct as components of the overall Self-Esteem. Her study found that a person may have high regard on one facet, and may have a low on one [1]. Due to an increasing importance on interpersonal relationships, it is no longer surprising that relationship-oriented dimensions such as making new friends can greatly affect the self-esteem of first year students who are usually adolescents.

Growing up, a person goes from one chapter to another, closing one door and opening up a new one. While some are not given the opportunity, majority of the growing children are given education. One of the changes a student faces is the transition from high school to college. This transition is usually the biggest change an adolescent experience. The change in

environment, the change of residence, and the change of school usually affect the adjustment of first year students.

Adjustment from high school to college can be quite overwhelming to some of the students. The change from being the oldest, biggest, and most powerful students of high school to being the youngest, smallest, and least powerful students of college also adds up to the different changes a first year student experience. Despite this, the new environment can also provide better opportunities for the students to grow physically and intellectually, to learn how to be independent, and to interact with different kinds of people [3].

This study is done with the aim of realizing the relationship of self-esteem of a person to higher adjustment to college. It also intends to understand the challenges first year students' face during their transition from high school to college so Guidance Counselors, teachers, and the academic community may give them a thorough and multidimensional assistance. Despite having massive literature available, a local study is still limited. It also hopes to be a framework of the different programs the higher education institutions may offer to its first year students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the relationship between self-esteem and first year students' adjustment to college in Higher Education Institutions in Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. Specifically, it aimed to determine the level of self-esteem of the students in terms of physical attributes, social relationship, self-efficacy and self-regard and its significant difference. Furthermore, it also aimed to determine the level of adjustment to college of the students in terms of academic, social and institutional adjustment and its significant difference. Lastly, it aimed to determine the significant relationship between the respondents' self-esteem and adjustment to college.

METHOD

The study used descriptive-correlational-comparative methods of research. In this study, the respondents' level of self-esteem and adjustment to college were described and correlated. Indicators of each variable were compared to one another. The respondents, selected through stratified random sampling, came from the four most populated higher education institutions in Calapan City namely Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology – Calapan

Campus (MinSCAT), City College of Calapan, Divine Word College of Calapan, and St. Anthony Colleges. There were a total of three hundred fifty seven (357) student-respondents taken from the grand total of three thousand three hundred and five (3,305) first year students.

A self-made questionnaire was used to measure the self-esteem of the respondents. It was validated by two registered guidance counselors, and a college professor. Reliability coefficient of each indicator are as follows: Physical Attributes (0.89, High), Social Relationship (0.94, Very High), Self-Efficacy (0.89, High), and Self-Regard (0.89, High). The questionnaire for adjustment to college was adapted from the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire by Robert W. Baker and Bohdan Stryk. A local validation and reliability test was also done to ensure the soundness of the adapted questionnaire. Same validators checked it while the reliability coefficient are as follows: Academic Adjustment (0.92, Very High), Social Adjustment (0.85, High), Emotional Adjustment (0.82, High), and (Institutional Attachment 0.82).

A letter of request was served to the head of each higher education institution to secure permission to administer the questionnaires for both self-esteem and adjustment to college. Upon approval, the administration of the questionnaires was personally done by the researcher for the uniformity of instructions to all the respondents. Informed consent was given to the students before answering the questionnaire, and was assured that the data gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality. They were given ample time to answer the questionnaires, and retrieval was immediately followed after.

Data gathered comprised of the respondents' level of self-esteem and level of adjustment to college. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tool such as mean and rank. The relationship between the two variables was measured using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient while One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to measure the difference of the indicators.

The level of self-esteem and the level of adjustment to college of the respondents was described using the following scale and its statistical limit.

Scale	Statistical Limit	Description
1	1.00-1.49	Very Low
2	1.50-2.49	Low
3	2.50-3.49	Moderate
4	3.50-4.49	High
5	4.50-5.00	Very High

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Self-Esteem in terms of Physical Attributes

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I am comfortable with my body structure.	4.16	6.5	High Level
2. I consider myself as physically presentable.	4.16	6.5	High Level
3. I am happy with my own appearance.	4.48	1	High Level
4. I am confident with my body movement/ coordination.	4.24	4.5	High Level
5. I try to have a healthy lifestyle to take care of my body.	4.24	4.5	High Level
6. I am comfortable with my weight.	3.83	8	High Level
7. I try to make an effort to look at my best.	4.37	2	High Level
8. I accept positively the comments I receive about how I look.	4.27	3	High Level
Overall Mean:	4.22		High Level

As shown in Table 1, the respondents have a high level on their self-esteem in terms of their physical attributes as indicated by the overall mean score of 4.22. It reveals that the respondents are comfortable with their physical characteristics, and has a positive mindset towards it.

The finding is consistent with existing studies [5],[6] that body image influences the self-esteem and psychological well-being of the adolescents. As stated, good self-esteem is reached through good body satisfaction.

Table 2. Self-Esteem in terms of Social Relationship

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I am delighted meeting new people.	4.24	2	High Level
2. I get along with the people I usually socialize with.	4.08	3.5	High Level
3. I feel confident while talking to anyone.	3.83	7	High Level
4. I feel relaxed being with a group of people.	3.89	5	High Level
5. I feel that my friends enjoy being with me.	4.25	1	High Level
6. I am comfortable sharing my ideas and feelings to my friends.	4.08	3.5	High Level
7. I can carry myself on social gatherings.	3.85	6	High Level
8. I feel fine regardless of what others may think about me.	3.82	8	High Level
Overall Mean:	4.01		High Level

The overall mean score of 4.01 in Table 2 described as high level which implies that respondents have good social relationship with the people they interact with on a daily basis. It also indicates that the respondents are confident and comfortable dealing with other people.

The finding implies that as a human being, respondents have a tendency to be sociable and companionable. This is also in line with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically the third of which is the need to belong. It can also be noted that next to this need is the Esteem Needs, which is described as the need to develop a sense of self-worth. Additionally, it is in consonance with the studies of Denissen, Penke, Schmitt, and van Aken[7] and Sheshu, Zhilla, and Dervishi[8] that there is a positive link between healthy social relations and self-esteem of a person. It thus then implicate that social relationship plays an important role on the overall self-esteem of a person.

Table 3. Self-Esteem in terms of Self-Efficacy

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I like learning new things.	4.76	1	Very High Level
2. I feel excited when I have to do a new task.	4.18	3	High Level
3. I like to try things even if it seems hard.	4.20	2	High Level
4. I can think of different ways of doing things.	4.05	4	High Level
5. I can remain calm when things don't go as planned.	3.77	7	High Level
6. I can perform tasks successfully.	3.81	6	High Level
7. I can accomplish the tasks I have for a day.	3.74	8	High Level
8. I can achieve the academic goals I desire.	3.85	5	High Level
Overall Mean:	4.05		High Level

The overall mean of 4.05 in Table 3 indicates that the respondents have a high level of belief that they can perform tasks. The result implied that respondents are open to learning new things, and having different perspectives in solving a problem. This is perhaps because HEIs provide a more challenging tasks than in secondary schools, students are now learning to try new things and in the process, learning to believe in themselves.

The result conforms to that of Afari, Ward, and Khine [9] and Di Guinta, Alessandri, Gerbino, Kanacri, Zuffiano, and Caprara [10] studies which found out that students' self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy correlates with each other.

Table 4. Mean Level of the respondents' Self-Esteem in terms of Self-Regard

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I have a clear sense of who I am.	4.36	3	High Level
2. I feel good about who I am.	4.45	1	High Level
3. I firmly hold onto my values and beliefs.	4.31	5	High Level
4. I have a positive mindset in life.	4.35	4	High Level
5. I believe that I am a morally good person.	4.37	2	High Level
6. I have time to reflect about my life.	4.27	6	High Level
7. I am responsible for my own actions.	4.29	7	High Level
8. I feel that people trust me.	4.10	8	High Level
Overall Mean:	4.31		High Level

As can be gleaned from Table 4, the respondents showed a high level of their self-regard with an overall mean score of 4.31. The findings show that the respondents are aware of their core values that they have developed growing up. It is in line with the theory of Erikson that the developmental task of an adolescent is to develop a set of values that they believe in and guide them[1]. Their identity, respect for oneself, values, and positive orientation in life facilitate a self-regard that contributes to a high level of self-esteem. This means that young as they are, the respondents have matured into an individual who know their worth.

This finding is in line with Tracy's [11] view that knowing your core values makes a person increase his self-esteem. People who have a clear idea on what they believe in and what they value would like and respect themselves. Being consistent with your values improves self-image, and thus building a good self-esteem.

The overall mean score of 3.98 in Table 5, still considered as high level, indicates that the respondents have a good adjustment on the academic aspect of their college life. This also implies that the respondents are still on the process of being accustomed to the academic demands of higher education institutions, being just on their first year of college. However, interest, self-discipline, and the class environment are some of the factors that help students to adapt to the higher standard of learning.

The finding supports earlier studies [12] that because college has much more academic demands than high school, academic adjustment is usually the biggest

factor that plays in university adjustment. Studies also suggest that academic adjustment also correlates with college retention.

Table 5. Adjustment to College in terms of Academic Adjustment

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I attend classes regularly.	4.45	1	High Level
2. I feel at ease during class discussions.	3.74	6	High Level
3. I like how my professors handle our class.	4.11	3	High Level
4. I get passing grades on my quizzes and exams.	3.64	8	High Level
5. I can concentrate while studying.	3.77	7	High Level
6. I am able to submit class requirements on time.	3.94	4	High Level
7. I can manage my time effectively for my school works.	3.79	5	High Level
8. I am interested with the course I am taking.	4.38	2	High Level
Overall Mean:	3.98		High Level

Table 6. Adjustment to College in terms of Social Adjustment

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I found new friends in college.	4.71	1	Very High Level
2. I have close friends that I can talk about my problems.	4.33	2	High Level
3. I like to hang-out with friends inside the school.	3.99	3.5	High Level
4. I can easily get along with my classmates.	3.99	3.5	High Level
5. I feel at ease meeting other students around the campus.	3.68	5	High Level
6. I can approach my professors during consultation hours.	3.57	6	High Level
7. I join organizations/groups to meet other people.	3.32	8	Moderate Level
8. I enjoy social gatherings like toast party in school.	3.42	7	Moderate Level
Overall Mean:	3.88		High Level

The overall mean score is 3.88 is described as high level. Based on the result, it implies that majority of the students have adjusted on the social aspect of college life. They have met and garnered friends to be with, and comfortable with the different people they interact inside the institution. Among the different indicators, social adjustment received the lowest overall mean score. It may then imply that among the four facets of adjustment presented in this study, their sociability is the last to be accustomed to their new phase.

The finding is in accordance with the study of Azic, Becirevic, and Jakovic[13] that social adjustment is an important domain for college freshmen's life satisfaction. Students who perceived themselves as well integrated in social activities, involved in satisfactory relations with others and who are in general satisfied with social aspects of university environment are more satisfied with their overall life.

Table 7. Adjustment to College in terms of Emotional Adjustment

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I am happy being a college student.	4.59	1	Very High Level
2. I enjoy the things I am doing in college.	4.39	2	High Level
3. I have fun while studying.	4.15	4	High Level
4. I feel inspired to go to school every morning.	4.19	3	High Level
5. I can be calm whenever I am in school.	3.99	6	High Level
6. I feel at home in school.	3.69	8	High Level
7. I generally have a good mood while I am in school.	3.80	7	High Level
8. I am excited on the years that I'll be spending in this school.	4.12	5	High Level
Overall Mean:	4.12		High Level

The overall mean score of 4.12 in Table 7 described as high level denotes that respondents have positive emotions towards their experience in college. This may imply that even still in high school, respondents are preparing themselves emotionally on the expected change they will face.

The finding is in consonance with Nema, Suvidha, and Bansal's[14] view that a person is emotionally adjusted if he/she expresses emotion in a proper situation in a proper form. Emotional adjustment is

essential for creating a sound personality, and is usually followed by the social adjustment.

Table 8. Adjustment to College in terms of Institutional Attachment

Item	Mean	Rank	Description
1. I am proud to be a student of this school.	4.67	2	Very High Level
2. I am pleased with my decision to go to this school.	4.16	5	High Level
3. I enjoy spending time in campus beyond my class hours.	3.99	8	High Level
4. I am confident with the training I will receive in this school.	4.17	4	High Level
5. I hope to finish my degree in this school.	4.72	1	Very High Level
6. I feel safe inside the campus.	4.41	3	High Level
7. I know where to go for my different needs as a student.	4.09	7	High Level
8. I enjoy institutional activities such as intramurals and Christmas party.	4.13	6	High Level
Overall Mean:	4.29		High Level

The overall mean score of 4.29 in Table 8 described as high level implies that the students have a good and positive regard on the institution they are currently enrolled in. It may also suggest that at the span of one academic year, the respondents have already developed an attachment to their school.

This is in consonance with the study of Almeida, Guisande, and Paisana[15] that being involved in campus activities promotes adjustment, success, and development of students during their stay in the university. The results revealed that students who are more involved and attached with the institution have a correlation with the adjustment and academic achievement.

Table 9. Difference in the Level of Self-Esteem Indicators of the respondents

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	Computed F-value	Critical F-value	Result
Between groups	22.69	3	7.56	27.73	2.61	*
Within groups	388.41	1424	0.27			
Total	411.11	1427				

*=significant

Table 9 revealed that there is a significant difference among the indicators of self-esteem since the computed F-values (27.73) was greater than the critical value (2.61), using degrees of freedom (3, 1424) at 5% level of significance.

This indicates that a person evaluates himself not only with just one aspect of his life, but on the interaction of different factors. Self-esteem is considered multidimensional, but these dimensions are not universal. The result revealed the subjective worthiness of these dimensions. A person may consider one domain greater than the other while another person may look at an entirely different domain. Because self-esteem is how a person evaluates himself, it is up to him to decide which part of his life he consider valuable. This also suggests that because of the variability, students may react differently from their environment or personal situation.

Table 10. Difference in the Level of Adjustment to College in terms of its Indicators of the respondents

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	Computed F-value	Critical F-value
Between groups	34.71	3	11.57	38.56*	2.61
Within groups	427.23	1424	0.30		
Total	461.93	1427			

*=significant

Table 10 revealed that there is a significant difference among the different indicators of adjustment to college since the computed F-value (38.56) was greater than the critical value (2.61), using degrees of freedom (3, 1424) at 5% level of significance.

This implies that the different aspects of adjustment to college have different weight on the overall adjustment of the respondents. This may also suggest that respondents may have different regard on the indicators. College is a place of diversity – the student coming from different places, environment, culture, language, teaching strategies, as well as the role of a student, and thus revealed that adjustment to college is a step by step process that takes time.

Table 11 reveals the Relationship between the level of Self-Esteem and the level of Adjustment to College of the respondents.

Since all the computed r-value ranging from 0.36 to 0.59 were greater than the critical value of 0.098 at 5% level of significance with 357 degrees of freedom, thus, there is a significant relationship between the level of self-esteem and the level of adjustment to college. The r-value revealed a very low to moderate degree of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The coefficients of determination revealed that 13% to 35% of the variance in the level of self-esteem could be accounted to the level of adjustment to college of the respondents. The remaining percentage of 65% to 87% revealed that the variation could be accounted to other factors not included in the study. It shows how complex the adjustment process a student undergoes during his first year in college. It also implies that as a person's confidence in himself increases, his flexibility and adaptability to change increases as well. This may mean that during the process of transition, a person hold on to himself first while still adjusting until he gets comfortable with the change such as new environment like college.

Table 11. Correlational analysis of the level of self-esteem and the level of adjustment to college

IV: Level of Self-Esteem	DV: Level of Adjustment to College							
	Academic Adjustment		Social Adjustment		Emotional Adjustment		Institutional Attachment	
	Computed r-value	r ²	Computed r-value	r ²	Computed r-value	r ²	Computed r-value	r ²
Physical Attributes	0.38*	0.14	0.40*	0.16	0.44*	0.19	0.45*	0.20
Social Relationship	0.42*	0.18	0.59*	0.35	0.42*	0.18	0.42*	0.18
Self-Efficacy	0.52*	0.27	0.36*	0.13	0.46*	0.21	0.41*	0.17
Self-Regard	0.46*	0.21	0.37*	0.14	0.43*	0.18	0.39*	0.15

*- Significant

Critical r-value= 0.098

Degrees of freedom: = 355

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It was found out that First year students from the selected HEIs in Calapan City have a high self-esteem. Although considered high, the indicator about social relationship presented to be the least comparing to the other indicators which are physical attributes, self-efficacy, and self-regard. They can easily adjust to college life in terms of academic, and emotional as well as being attached to their institution but it takes them a while to be socially adjusted. There is a variation among physical attributes, social relationship, self-esteem and self-regard, the self-esteem indicators. It plays different roles to a person and these indicators may weigh differently depending on what one believes in. Respondents have different ways of adjusting to college as regards to academic, social, emotional, and institutional attachment. Some of these facets were easier for them to adapt than the other. Self-esteem and adjustment to college have a positive correlation, and therefore both can increase as the same time.

How a person evaluates himself and how a person reacts on his new environment will depend on how he perceives it. The Cognitive Appraisal Theory provides a glimpse on why people react differently, or why the indicators of both self-esteem and adjustment to college have difference. Because the college makes sense to them, they evaluate the new environment as something tolerable, thus helping them to adjust.

Using Gordon Allport's Trait Theory, this study can be more understood as the process of adjusting is unique to each person. It can also provide a background on how a person transition from high school to college since the theory mentions reflecting and interacting with the new environment.

However, one of the limitations of the study that should be addressed for future research is the time frame. The study was done during the second semester of the academic year, hence, a long time for adjustment was already made. Data gathered was through a self-report questionnaire, and no further discussion was performed for an in-depth perspective from the respondents and that they came from only one area in the province.

Therefore, it is recommended that the academic community, especially the instructors/professors should still provide classroom activities that promote personal growth and holistic development given the fact that students generally have high self-esteem. There should also be sequential institutional activities that encourage the adjustment of new students in order to strengthen the college retention rate. Students as early as first year

in college look for value on their education they are receiving and how it will affect their future career, camaraderie, and their expected learning. Even though these students are expected to be independent, partaking of the parents in their children's college education influences the students' adjustment to college.

Moreover, since self-esteem and adjustment to college correlates, teachers and guidance counselors who have a direct contact to the students should be sensitive enough in order to address the psychological constructs and must adopt a multidimensional approach in teaching and in counseling. Lastly, guidance counselors of Higher Education Institutions may create a guidance program specifically designed for first year college students. This program may include seminar, workshops, psychological testing, and counseling that aim to facilitate their transition and adjustment to college, as well as the enhancement of self-esteem. It also addresses personal, emotional, and psychosocial development of the students.

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