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# Academic Adjustments For First-Year Students: Influence Factors And Measurement

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The transition from high school to the college stage is a period that students must pass. During the transition period, students who have turned into college students will face various changes in the learning process, demands, conflict problems, and new personalities in college life, which can cause stress and mental health problems. In dealing with these changes, reasonable academic adjustment, support from family and friends, and effective coping strategies are needed so that they can get through this transition period successfully and enjoy new experiences as students in college. Research on academic adjustment has been done before, so researchers are interested in conducting a theoretical study on the factors that influence academic adjustment, especially in first-year students. This research uses a literature study method by analyzing thirty research articles related to student academic adjustment. Based on the analysis results, it can be seen that the factors that affect the academic adjustment of first-year students are 1) demographic factors; 2) psychological factors; 3) environmental factors. Currently, academic adjustment can be measured using self-report questionnaires that have been developed, such as the College Inventory of Academic Adjustment, Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ), and College Adaptation Scale (CAS).

**Keywords:** academic adjustment; adaptation to a new environment; first year of higher education.

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## Академическая адаптация студентов первого курса: влияние различных факторов и их измерение

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Переход из средней школы в колледж проходят все студенты. В этот переходный период учащиеся, ставшие студентами колледжа, сталкиваются с изменениями в учебном процессе, новыми требованиями, конфликтами и новыми людьми, что может вызвать стресс и проблемы с психическим здоровьем. Для того чтобы успешно преодолеть этот переходный период и получить удовольствие от опыта обучения в колледже, необходимы разумная адаптация к учебе, поддержка семьи и друзей, а также эффективные стратегии преодоления сложностей. Исследования академической адаптации проводились и ранее, поэтому ученые стремятся провести теоретические исследования факторов, влияющих на академическую адаптацию, особенно у студентов первого курса. В данном исследовании используется метод изучения литературы путем анализа тридцати научных статей, связанных с академической адаптацией

студентов. По результатам анализа видно, что факторами, влияющими на академическую адаптацию первокурсников, являются: 1) демографические факторы; 2) психологические факторы; 3) факторы среды. В настоящее время академическая адаптация может быть измерена с помощью опросников самоотчета, таких как College Inventory of Academic Adjustment, Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) и College Adaptation Scale (CAS).

**Ключевые слова:** академическая адаптация; адаптация к новой среде; первый курс.

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## Introduction

Indonesian people's awareness of the importance of higher education continues to grow, as evidenced by the number of high school students who continue their education to higher education. Based on data from the Higher Education Database of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, there are 6349941 students with a breakdown of the percentage of Strata-1 students by 84,8%, Diploma-3 by 13,1%, and Diploma-4 by 2%. The same data source states there will be 1983786 new students 2022 and more than 2 million new students in 2023.

High school students who have graduated and become first-year students will go through a transition period where new students must adjust to the academic demands of college, develop study habits, and adjust learning strategies in a new learning environment [32]. In their statement, [31] mentioned that adaptation in campus life is significant as an experience and reflection to become a successful member of society because when students adapt well on campus, they have fulfilled their duties and responsibilities.

More specifically, student academic adjustment in college as an individual's ability to manage social, psychological, and scientific challenges when experiencing the transition to college life [4]. Lecture adaptation refers to the interaction of students with their environment, including student

achievement and personal growth. Academic adjustment is crucial when students face campus life changes, demands, or conflicts [34]. This is because students' academic adaptation is complex, not only limited to adaptation in lectures, but also social, personal, emotional, and adaptation to institutions; especially in the transition to college, students often question their relationships, life goals, and self-esteem.

Students' adjustment to the university environment is critical in predicting outcomes and essential for future achievements. A necessary period in the adjustment process is seen from the first six weeks of the initial semester [9]. During this period, students will encounter various new situations, such as the lecture system, learning methods different from high school, more difficult lecture materials, friends from different regions, and a new living environment. The university education system can be confusing for new students, and this confusion becomes even more significant when students come from different languages and diverse cultural backgrounds [33].

In lectures, students are required to understand and master lecture material, be able to think critically, and analyze through assignments, practicums, exams, presentations, and so on. Revealed several problems that are often faced by new students, namely difficulties in understanding the material, nervousness during

presentations, and inability to perform optimally [30]. Researched first-year students at Al-Azhar University Indonesia and found that 44,7% of students still have difficulty adapting to the environment and demands of higher education [34].

The same thing was stated by [7] in their research, stating that around one in three new students reported experiencing mental health problems in their first year, both related to internal and external problems. Furthermore, the study also revealed students with external problems, namely low academic achievement. The same thing was also revealed by [36] that the complex demands of higher education put students at high risk of experiencing emotional problems, difficulty building social relationships, low academic achievement, loss of motivation, and failure to complete their studies.

The environmental changes that new students in college must face will shape their perceptions, especially regarding their ability to overcome various obstacles and challenges in their university life [29]. Students' inability to adjust can hinder the learning process and completion of studies. Students who fail to adjust risk experiencing academic stress [27; 34; 36]. Research conducted by [23] showed that as many as 50 out of 204 students experienced high academic stress, while 80 students experienced moderate academic stress. This happens because students are less able to adapt to the academic demands and education system in higher education, causing many students to feel depressed. In addition, the desire not to continue or resign from the recovery is one of the effects of students' inability to adjust. This could be related to the academic environment or social environment.

Based on the description above, it is known that adjustment is an essential factor for students facing the college transition period. Studies on adjustment have also been carried out before. However, considering the impact that significantly affects student life, especially in terms of academics, it is necessary to conduct a theoretical study of the factors that influence and the measurements used to determine the academic adjustment of first-year students.

## Method

Researchers used the literature study method developed by [25]. Researchers researched literature from various journals, books, and other articles to form new writing on the topic raised. After searching, the researcher used the theoretical review technique, which presents several theories or concepts that focus on one previously determined topic. Then, the theories are compared by providing logical, consistent assumptions and by the scope of the research explanation.

Researchers searched using a range of article publication years from 2013 to 2022. They obtained 30 research articles on student academic adjustment, which were then used for analysis. In selecting the articles used, researchers collected data sequences that were very relevant, relevant, and quite relevant to the topic so that the data collected did not have to be the same as the topic to be raised but still had a connection [15].

## Result

Based on the results of the analysis of thirty articles on academic adjustment in college students showing what factors influence, then the researchers grouped them into three categories, namely 1) demographic factors including age, gender, and social identity perspective; 2) psychological factors, including self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, academic grit, academic flow, coping strategies; resilience and 3) environmental factors including peer support, parent and child relationships.

Based on the search for previous research on measuring academic adjustment can be done using self-report questionnaires that have been developed by experts, such as the College Inventory of Academic Adjustment by [6], Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) by [4], Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) by [9], and College Adaptation Scale (CAS) by [31].

## Discussion

### A. Influence Factors

Based on the results of the study, researchers found factors that influence students' academic adjustment and then categorized them

into three main factors, namely 1) demographic factors, 2) psychological factors, and 3) environmental factors.

### 1. *Demographic Factors*

#### a. Age

Age influences student adjustment. Research results by [24] show that older students adjust better.

#### b. Gender

Several journal results report that gender influences students' adjustment to college [5; 17; 26]. Female students demonstrate higher commitment to educational goals and attachment to college than males. Meanwhile, the research results by [24] show that male students have better emotional adjustment than female students. Several studies report that female students have higher levels of risk factors for stress and anxiety in the first year of college [11; 35].

#### c. A social identity perspective

Direct and indirect relationship between the social identity perspective and students' social interactions in higher education [40]. Students who assess their social status does not match that of the university where they study will limit their social interactions, impacting their social adjustment with peers, lecturers, and the college environment. Perceptions of rejection and hatred correlate with academic adjustment [3]. Students who perceive that they will receive rejection and hatred from their new residence will find it difficult to interact with other people.

### 2. *Psychological Factors*

#### a. Self-efficacy

Several studies state that self-efficacy influences student adjustment [1; 16; 20; 30; 38; 45]. Stephen further explained that increasing student self-efficacy at the end of the first semester is associated with a greater chance of persisting into the next semester and being academically successful. Students who have good academic self-efficacy will have a positive attitude toward themselves and their environment, making it easy for them to adapt to the environment and motivate themselves to complete academic tasks [1; 16; 38]. On the other hand, students

with low self-efficacy will feel anxious and lack self-confidence, making it difficult to trust others and affecting their ability to build social relationships [41]. However, this differs from [39] research results, which stated that academic self-efficacy, widely accepted as a factor influencing student success, does not correlate with academic adjustment. These inconsistent results can be material for further examination of self-efficacy variables.

#### b. Self-Regulated Learning

Research results state that self-regulated study behavior directly affects academic adjustment [39]. When students develop better study habits. Although adaptive efforts are more accessible to identify in the first semester of the first year of study, they continue throughout academic training. Students who have good self-regulated learning will be able to regulate their emotions, activities, and context when studying to achieve academic goals [42]. So that when students are in a transition period in college, they will find it easy to overcome challenges and survive stressful situations in the first year of college.

#### c. Academic grit

The research results show that grit is positively related to academic adjustment [8]. Show that one aspect of grit, the persistence of effort, is a consistent and adaptive predictor [44]. Students with a high level of grit have enthusiasm and a never-give-up attitude when completing their assignments. This never-give-up attitude can also help students adjust to their first year at college. Grit becomes capital for students in adapting to college [27]. Individuals who have grit are described as tending to work hard to face challenges and maintain efforts and interests in the long term, even though the individual experiences failure, difficulties, or crises. Each individual's grit varies, determining how individuals interact in various environmental situations [14].

#### d. Academic flow

Pleasant conditions will make students comfortable studying, interacting, and carrying out desired academic activities, facilitating the academic adjustment process for new students [19]. Positive experiences in a university environment serve as a foundation for development,

and dealing with problems well is an important developmental task for a person [31].

e. Coping strategies

Problem-focused coping strategies positively relate to adjustment [38]. The same thing was expressed by [33]. Students who can overcome negative situations, apply appropriate problem-solving strategies, delay immediate gratification, and know how to engage in self-development will more easily undergo the transition period during the year. First in college.

f. Resilience

Several studies report that resilience is positively related to adjustment to college [10; 13]. Further said that students with high resilience will be able to rise from adversity when they experience problems, be optimistic, and overcome obstacles in a new environment [10].

3. Environmental Factors

a. Social support

Several studies have revealed the influence of peer support on student adjustment [21; 30; 43]. Peer communication positively influences social adjustment but negatively influences personal-emotional adjustment. This means that good communication between peers improves students' social adjustment. Peer alienation harms personal-emotional adjustment but has a positive effect on institutional attachment. In other words, if students are ostracized by their peers, it will make it difficult for students emotional adjustment [43]. However, expressed different results and stated that social support had a negligible effect on adjustment [28]. Differences in the results of these studies can be reviewed to check the consistency of variable effects

b. Parental parenting style

The research results show a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and adaptation variables [18]. Further explained that harmonious (reciprocal) relationships and discussions with parents directly relate to adjustment to university [18].

**B. Measurement**

Academic adjustment in college was first introduced by [2], who introduced the interaction

of students with their environment, with student achievement and personal growth as indicators of success [34; 37]. The results of this study are considered less able to predict academic adjustment because, the academic adjustment in students is multifaceted, so according to him, academic adjustment is an individual component that can adjust to academic, social, personal and emotional demands and institutions [4; 36].

Currently, academic adjustment can be measured using previously developed self-report questionnaires such as the College Inventory of Academic Adjustment, Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ), and College Adaptation Scale (CAS).

1. *College Inventory of Academic Adjustment*

A measuring instrument for academic adjustment in higher education was first developed and introduced by [6], namely the College Inventory of Academic Adjustment. This measuring instrument can only measure academic achievement as a predictor.

2. *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)*

Developed a more comprehensive measurement tool than previous studies, namely the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which includes several aspects such as academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustment, as well as institutional commitment and goals [4]. The SACQ is a self-report consisting of 67 items with nine options in Likert format (ranging from strongly disagree rated 1 to agree rated 9 strongly). The evidence of validity and reliability of this scale is very adequate, above 0,8.

Many researchers use this measurement tool in their research, including [9; 24; 26; 27; 39; 40; 43; 44; 45]. However, different results were shown by [12], stating that the fit index obtained on SACQ was inadequate. This means that SACQ is less suitable for measuring adjustment in college students. Therefore, further research is needed on the SACQ scale because of inconsistent research results. The number of items

that are too many is thought to be one of the factors causing it. In subsequent research, [22] evaluated the internal structure of SACQ into a short version called SACQ-S. Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis, 38 valid items were found from the initial 67 items.

### 3. Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ)

The Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) was developed by [9] focusing only on students' academic adjustment. Compared to the SACQ, the AAQ is more focused on measuring students' inability to adapt academically and incorporates the neuroticism factor into the measurement tool.

### 4. College Adaptation Scale (CAS)

The College Adaptation Scale (CAS) was developed by [31] and consists of five dimensions: interpersonal relationships, academic activities, career preparation, personality, and social experiences. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from one point for not at all to five points for strongly agree). Higher scores indicate better adjustment to college life. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of

the measuring instrument at the time of development was 0,86.

## Conclusion

Based on the exposure from the literature analysis, it can be concluded that the factors that influence the academic adjustment of first-year students are 1) demographic factors, including age, gender, and social identity perspective; 2) psychological factors, including self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, academic grit, academic flow, coping strategies; and 3) environmental factors including peer support, parent and child relationships. Some variables were inconsistent as predictors of academic adjustment, namely self-efficacy and social support.

Most of the articles in the study used the same subject characteristics, namely first-year students. Although some studies have modified the measuring instruments used, there are similarities in measuring instruments, namely using The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by [4]. Other measuring instruments that have been developed and can be used to measure academic adjustment are the Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) by [9] and the College Adaptation Scale (CAS) by [31].

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