



## Research Article

# EXPLORING ACADEMIC SUPPORT NEEDS FOR TRANSITIONAL ADJUSTMENT OF NEWLY ADMITTED STUDENTS IN CAMEROON STATE UNIVERSITIES

Journal Website:  
<https://theamericanjournals.com/index.php/tajsssei>

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Submission Date: February 18, 2023, Accepted Date: February 23, 2023,

Published Date: February 28, 2023 |

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajsssei/Volume05Issue02-03>

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## ABSTRACT

The study was carried out on academic support and its influence on the social adjustment of newly admitted students in Cameroon state Universities. The transition from secondary school to the University is one of the most stressful events in adolescents' life and can have a negative impact on their social adjustment. The researcher made use of a mixed method with a concurrent nested research design. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire, interview guide and open group discussion. The sample was made up of 759 students and 13 Guidance counsellors proportionately selected five state Universities (University of Bamenda, University of Buea, University of Maroua and University of Yaounde 1 and university of Betoua). The quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used are frequency count, percentages and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable for a quick comprehension of the overall findings. To test the hypotheses of the study, the Spearman rho test was used. In addition to the Spearman's rho test, the Cox and Snell test was equally computed to explain the explanatory between the variable in the hypothesis in terms of percentage to ease comprehension. On the other hand, the qualitative data derived from open ended questions were analysed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes, groundings/frequency and quotations. Finding showed that academic support ( $r$ -value 0.280\*\*,  $p$ -value < 0.001) influence the social adjustment of newly admitted University students. The positivity of the influence implied that newly admitted University students are more likely to be socially adjusted when they have good academic support. The implications of this finding is that an increase in academic support will increase the student level of social adjustment in the state

Universities in Cameroon. Based on the finding, it was recommended that the guidance counselors, lecturers and the community should help adolescents in their transition process from secondary school to the University so that they can easily adjust in their social and learning environment.

## **KEYWORDS**

Academic support, adolescents, transition, social adjustment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Moving from high school to the University is an important milestone for adolescents' students. However, the transition from secondary school to university can be challenging, especially for adolescents leaving their homes, environment, families, and friends to a new location. This is because the transition is accompanied by several changes in both the school environment and in the social context. Adolescents do not only have to get used to a larger building, the different teachers/lecturers and a larger number of peers. They also have to adapt to the ways of thinking and the way youth behave in the Universities. These changes can have positive or negative effects on adolescents' social adjustment (Waters et al. 2012).

The first year in a university is a critical transition period because it is a time when students lay a foundation in their subsequent academic success. Students entering into a new type of environment are exposed to various psychosocial challenges such as coping up with subject loads, relating with teachers, other students and adjusting to a new environment. These are some common adjustment challenges especially for those incoming students who do not have a clear picture of what University life is all about (Chidzonga, 2014). It is during this adjustment processes that adolescents may

be pushed to display an array of attitude and behavior that affects their social life on campus. This chapter covers the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, research hypotheses, justifications for the study, significance of the study, scope and delimitations of the study and operational definition of terms.

Academic support is vital for early development, transition, learning, and psychological wellbeing (e.g. Demaray & Malecki, 2002). Perceived academic support can be very important during adolescence where individuals experience rapid changes biologically, emotionally, and socially. In addition, a positive social network can also be protective of issues arising during the transition from secondary school to the University. Parental support may buffer children from the emotional effects of the transition from secondary education. Peer relationships facilitate a positive transition on a range of adaptation measures (peer acceptance, friendship quality, number of friends) predicted various positive post-transition wellbeing measures including academic achievement, loneliness (or lack of), self-esteem, and school involvement (Kingery et al., 2011).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Academic supports are programs and strategies that are used by schools to increase the academic achievement of students, particularly for students who may be at risk of diminished academic achievement (Brophy, 2000). The most obvious academic support might be tutoring. Effective tutoring programs provide motivation, personal individual attention, direct instruction, and error correction to increase students' academic skills. Mentoring programs are a common source of tutoring that may also provide motivational support to students.

The key benefit of providing academic support is that it will likely have a positive impact on the vital decision of students to remain in school (Somers & Piliawsky, 2004). Guiding students towards academic achievement connects them to futures that they can view as attainable. According to Somers and Piliawsky (2004), it is vital to appeal to students' personal pride in their school work, to have students accept the importance of behaving in a committed way to school by working hard and regularly attending classes, and to make concrete connections for students between their school work and their life goals.

Peer tutoring has been found to provide substantial academic benefits (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013). It can be helpful in any subject and in any grade, but is especially effective for middle and high school students and students with disabilities, particularly emotional or behavior disorders (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013). Peer tutoring is also most effective when tutors are carefully coached on what to do. Teachers should give tutors structured, prescriptive lessons. Tutors should also be trained so they understand basic teaching techniques such as giving praise and giving clear directions. Tutors should be students who have obtained high mastery of the task to be taught and should have good social skills.

Academic mentoring is a way that at-risk adolescents can obtain assistance to improve their academic functioning (Somers & Piliawsky, 2004). In this strategy, students work one on-one with a mentor who builds a relationship with the student and provides them with supplemental enrichment activities to build their academic self-esteem, motivation, and self-efficacy to enable them to achieve academically. Mentoring can be effective in increasing academic engagement and of course may also have positive impact on social and emotional development of the student (Herrera, 2004).

A supportive environment in school can represent an extension of personal resources, which means that students may be more inclined to act in planned ways on sources of stress as they attempt to improve the person-environment relationship (Anderson, 2000). Research in the first year university context has highlighted various positive outcomes associated with support. For instance, students felt personally validated when they received support from others, which contributed to positive coping at university. Furthermore, a significant relationship has been found between perceived social support and academic achievement in first year (DeBerard et al., 2004). Others have argued, however, that support is a multi-dimensional construct that has often been treated too narrowly (Winemuller et al. 1993). Notably, there is some agreement in the literature that support is actually composed of four main types, namely emotional (communication to others that they are valued), practical (material assistance), informational (cognitive guidance and advice), and social companionship support (spending time with others in leisure activities); (DeBerard et al. 2004).

Schlossberg (1981) noted that what is most important in the process is how the individual perceives the

transition and the degree to which the transition alters an individual's life. Bauer and McAdams (2004) suggested that an individual's view of the transition as being positive, negative, or irrelevant affects how the individual copes with the transition and whether he or she develops a strengthened sense of meaning or happiness in life.

Tinto (1975) theorized that social and academic integration influence a student's commitment to school. For example, the greater the level of students' social and academic integration with the institution is, the greater the level of commitment. When students cope easily with their academic works, they are more likely to strive in the university. Conversely, the lower the level of social and academic integration, is the less commitment to the institution. In the same vein, commitment to the institution and goal of achievement is directly linked to the decision to persist.

Schlossberg (1981) proposed that individuals go through three distinct phases when they are in transition: moving in, moving through, and moving out. Moving in involves being confronted with a transition or change; it requires leaving a known context and entering a new phase. Moving through follows the moving in process; this is where the day-to-day management of the new phase begins. In this stage the individual may need to learn new skills, and may also have to complete tasks and make difficult decisions. Moving out can be viewed as ending one series of transitions and beginning to ask what comes next.

In the process of moving in, through and out the University, students with anticipated transition encounter little or no challenges as they prepare well ahead of time, while those of the unanticipated transition encounter difficulties in the course of moving in, through and out of the transition process. This group of students find it difficult learning new

skills, cannot complete simple tasks as well as make healthy decisions. When students move to university by anticipated transition, that is, when they are well prepared for the changes they will meet in the university, they adjust easily. On the contrary, students who move by unanticipated transition, that they did not prepare to confront the changes they will meet in the university, find it difficult adjusting to university system. The group of students that move through unanticipated transition to university, portray disruptive behaviours, are maladjusted and their academic productivity is generally lower (Schlossberg, 1981).

## **METHODS**

The research method adopted in this study was the mixed method with a concurrent nested research design. That is because the data collected were both quantitative and qualitative at the same time or parallel within the same study. Quantitative data were dominant; qualitative data were embedded or nested within (Ivankova, 2014 & Mertens, 2007). The mixed method approach was seen suitable for this study because it provided a variety of provisions from which research questions were answered. The sample size of the study consists of 759 first year students from the five universities that made up the accessible population of the study. 13 counsellors were equally randomly selected from the five Universities.

These participants were students and guidance counsellors who were selected using the probability sampling technique that is the simple random sampling. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to select the five the major eco systems or biomes in Cameroon which are; the grass field, the coastal area, the forest area, and Sahalain from the tropical rains. The five Universities included, the University of Buea, the University of Bamenda,



University of Younde1, University of Maroua and university of Bertoua. The snow ball sampling technique was used to select the guidance counsellors.

A questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview guides were the instruments used to collect data from first year adolescents. The research instruments were validated using face, content and construct validity. In data processing, the quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used are frequency count, percentages and multiple responses set which

aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable for a quick comprehension of the overall findings. The Spearman rho test was used to test the hypothesis. In addition to the Spearman's rho test, the Cox and Snell test was equally computed to explain the explanatory between the variables in the hypothesis in terms of percentage to ease comprehension in readers who find it difficult to interpret the correlation coefficient value. On the other, the qualitative data derived from open ended questions were analysed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes, groundings/frequency and quotations

## FINDINGS

### Social Adjustment of Students

Table 1:  
Appraisal of Respondents Social Adjustment

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
I often feel nervous and tense when I am in school**	175 (23.3%)	201 (26.8%)	240 (32.0%)	134 (17.9%)	376 (50.1%)	374 (49.9%)
I can easily live and work with others harmoniously	305 (40.7%)	346 (46.1%)	81 (10.8%)	18 (2.4%)	651 (86.8%)	99 (13.2%)
I collaborate well with persons from diverse cultures	317 (42.3%)	355 (47.3%)	52 (6.9%)	26 (3.5%)	672 (89.6%)	78 (10.4%)
I am confident I made the right choice of university	363 (48.4%)	282 (37.6%)	71 (9.5%)	34 (4.5%)	645 (86.0%)	105 (14.0%)
I feel like the school environment is my home now	228 (30.4%)	307 (40.9%)	152 (20.3%)	63 (8.4%)	535 (71.3%)	215 (28.7%)
It has been difficult for me to meet and make new friends**	192 (25.6%)	243 (32.4%)	204 (27.2%)	111 (14.8%)	435 (58.0%)	315 (42.0%)
I feel happy about my studies	346 (46.1%)	310 (41.3%)	67 (8.9%)	27 (3.6%)	656 (87.5%)	94 (12.5%)
I always experience social anxiety**	190 (25.3%)	288 (38.4%)	173 (23.1%)	99 (13.2%)	478 (63.7%)	272 (36.3%)
I am independent in decision making	225 (30.0%)	244 (32.5%)	180 (24.0%)	101 (13.5%)	469 (62.5%)	281 (37.5%)
I can easily adapt to situations without any problem	249 (33.2%)	303 (40.4%)	122 (16.3%)	76 (10.1%)	552 (73.6%)	198 (26.4%)
<b>Multiple Responses Set (MRS)</b>	<b>2377 (31.7%)</b>	<b>2764 (36.9%)</b>	<b>1457 (19.4%)</b>	<b>902 (12.0%)</b>	<b>5141 (68.5%)</b>	<b>2359 (31.5%)</b>

\*\*coding reversed during the calculation of MRS

Based on social adjustment of newly admitted students, in aggregate, 68.5% are socially well adjusted while 31.5% are not. Specifically, 89.6% (672) of students collaborate well with persons from diverse cultures while 10.4% (78) are unable. 87.5% (656) feel happy about studies while 12.5% (94) are unhappy. Similarly, 86.8% (651) agreed to easily live and work with others harmoniously while 13.2% (99) disagreed. Also, 86.0% (645) of students are confident in their choice of study while 14.0% (105) are not. 73.6% (552) agreed to easily adapt to situations without any problem while 26.4% (198) disagreed. 71.3% (535) agreed to feel like the school environment is their home while 28.7% (215) do not. Also, 63.7% (478) of students always experience social anxiety while 36.3% (272) do not. Similarly, 62.5% (469) are independent in decision making while 37.5% (281) are not. Finally, 58.0% (435) of students are face with difficulties to meet and make new friends while 42.0% (315) are not face with such.

Table 2

**Students' Adjustment to University Life in Relation to Managing University Workload and Interacting with Students from Diverse Backgrounds**

Adjustment to University life in relation to:	Themes	Responses	
<b>Handling university workload and teaching methods</b>	No	“No” “Not so easy. The workload has been heavy” “Not easy at all”. “Still adapting to University workload and teaching methods”	
	Regular attendance	“By attending classes regularly” “Attend almost all classes and preparing well before CA and Exams”. “Attend all classes” “By always attending my lectures to make it possible to my understanding”	
	Working hard	“By rescheduling my time and working extra hard” “I do day-to-day studies in other to understand lectures”.	
	Effective time management	“I try to be organise and manage my time effectively” “My good time management skill is helping me”	
	Asking question	“By always asking questions when I do not understand”.	
	Revising with friends	“Looking for past questions and revising with friends”	
	Participation in group work	“By participating in group work”	
	Healthy relationship with lecturers	“I am keeping good relationship with my lecturers”.	
	<b>Interacting with students from diverse backgrounds</b>	Close relationship	“By always going closer to them” “I have learn to maintain close relationship with course mates that are academically serious” “By going closer to them in class”. “I always create relationship very easy”
		Communication	“Learn to communicate with others” “So far so good, I have been communicating with everybody”
Unable		“No	

Clubbing	“By engaging into club activities”
Participation in group work	“Going to club with course mates” “Yes, by participating in group activities” “By participating in group work”.

Based on students’ adjustment to university life in relation to managing university workload and interacting with students from diverse backgrounds, in relation to handling university workload and teaching methods, some of the students are unadjusted. For those who have adjusted, some said they try coming to school regularly as depicted in their statements “By attending classes regularly” “Attend almost all classes and preparing well before CA and Exams”. Some said they work hard “By rescheduling my time and working extra hard” “I do day-to-day studies in order to understand lectures”. Furthermore, some of the students said they manage time effectively as depicted in the statements “I try to be organised and manage my time effectively” “My good time management skill is helping me”. Some students said they have to revise with friends and ask lot of questions as depicted in their statements “By always asking questions when I do not understand”. “Looking for past questions and

revising with friends”. Furthermore, some of the students said they participated in group work and others have maintained healthy relationship with lecturers as depicted in their statements “By participating in group work” “I am keeping good relationship with my lecturers”.

Based on adjustment to interact with students from diverse backgrounds, some of the students said they have to maintain close relationship with others as depicted in their statements “By going closer to them in class”. “I always create relationship very easy”. Some have adopted constant communication. Others said they go for clubbing with course mates as depicted in their statements “By engaging into club activities” “Going to club with course mates”. Finally, some said they participate in group work as depicted in the statements “By participating in group activities” “By participating in group work”.

Table 3

### Counsellors Opinion on Ways to Facilitate Students Adjustment in the University

Themes	Quotations
Orientation services	“The University should focus more on orientation. The university should organise seminars about University and their programmes before application”. “The school should make learning environment conducive and guidance counsellors should do proper orientation”. “The counsellors in secondary schools should put in more effort to educate secondary students about the University. That is, tell them about different programmes and opportunities after graduation. This will help facilitate transition and adjustment of first year students’. “All counsellors should be involved in orientation and admission process”.
Employ more trained counsellors	“The government should train more counsellors and send to the University so that each faculty or department can have at least a counsellor. This will help facilitate first year students’ adjustment”. “More counsellors should be employed by the University”.

		“The University should employed more counsellors so that it will facilitate their adjustment”.
Classroom visitation		“They should include counselling on the time table so that counsellors can go to classrooms and talk to students. This implies that the school authorities should provide counselling in the classrooms”.
Student self-awareness		“The first thing is that the issue of adjustment must come from an individual, willingness to adjust. Those who are willing can easily adjust”.
Working in team with academic goals		“As a counsellor, I encourage them to have a team that is having the same goals and purpose of studies which aligns with positivity and determination to succeed”.
Educate students on realities of secondary schooling		“The University should build a strong network with secondary schools counsellors to tell the upper sixth students about the reality of secondary education before coming”.
Parental support		“The parents need to provide the students’ necessary needs”.
Compulsory counselling course		“A guidance and counseling course should be given to all first year students in state Universities so that it will facilitate their adjustment process”
Sensitization on importance of counselling		“All first year students should be sensitized about the importance of guidance and counselling services for students”.
Dedication from counsellors		“The guidance counsellor should take their job serious and put in their best during transition period to the University”.
Teachers support		“The teachers should create a friendly environment that can facilitate student adjustment”.

Based on ways to facilitate the adjustment of first year students in the University, some of the counsellor said they orientate the students as depicted in their statements “The University should focus more on orientation. The university should organise seminars about University and their programmes before application”. “The school should make learning environment conducive and guidance counsellors should do proper orientation”.

Others said more counsellors be employed as depicted in their statements “The government should train more counsellors and send to the University so that each faculty or department can have at least a counsellor. This will help facilitate first year students’ adjustment”. “More counsellors should be employed by the University”. Furthermore, some said classroom visitation for counseling be carry out “They should include counselling on the time table so that counsellors can go to classrooms and talk to students.

This implies that the school authorities should provide counselling in the classrooms”.

Some of the counsellors add that students need to be self-aware, and work in team. Furthermore, some counsellors said the University should build a strong network with secondary schools counsellors to tell the upper sixth students about the reality of secondary education before coming. Another counsellor said parents should provide the students’ necessary needs.

Also, some counsellor add guidance and counseling course be given to all first year students in state Universities to facilitate their adjustment process, all first year students be sensitized about the importance of guidance and counselling services. Another counsellor adds that the guidance counsellor should take their job serious and put in their best during transition period to the University. Finally, another counsellor said the teachers should create a friendly environment that can facilitate student adjustment.



To what extent does academic support influence the social adjustment of newly admitted students in Cameroon state Universities?

Table 4:

Respondents' Opinion on Academic Support

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
My teachers always care about us	288 (38.4%)	316 (42.1%)	73 (9.7%)	73 (9.7%)	604 (80.5%)	146 (19.5%)
I always feel belonging in school	287 (38.3%)	346 (46.1%)	86 (11.5%)	31 (4.1%)	633 (84.4%)	117 (15.6%)
We have recreational activities in school	269 (35.9%)	277 (36.9%)	146 (19.5%)	58 (7.7%)	546 (72.8%)	204 (27.2%)
I always go and do research in school	213 (28.4%)	301 (40.1%)	178 (23.7%)	58 (7.7%)	514 (68.5%)	236 (31.5%)
My courses are very interesting	328 (43.7%)	352 (46.9%)	55 (7.3%)	15 (2.0%)	680 (90.7%)	70 (9.3%)
I always participates in class	209 (27.9%)	382 (50.9%)	124 (16.5%)	35 (4.7%)	591 (78.8%)	159 (21.2%)
Our classes are very inclusive	211 (28.1%)	306 (40.8%)	123 (16.4%)	100 (14.7%)	517 (68.9%)	233 (31.1%)
Our school climate is very good and safe	170 (22.7%)	305 (40.7%)	112 (14.9%)	112 (14.9%)	475 (63.3%)	275 (36.7%)
My friends are always caring in school	222 (29.6%)	290 (38.7%)	156 (20.8%)	82 (10.9%)	512 (68.3%)	238 (31.7%)
I always go for counseling when I have problems	203 (27.1%)	265 (35.3%)	180 (24.0%)	102 (13.6%)	468 (62.4%)	282 (37.6%)
<b>Multiple Responses Set (MRS)</b>	<b>2400 (32.0%)</b>	<b>3140 (41.9%)</b>	<b>1284 (17.1%)</b>	<b>676 (9.0%)</b>	<b>5540 (73.9%)</b>	<b>1960 (26.1%)</b>

In aggregate, 73.9% of the newly admitted students have good academic support while 26.1% do not. Specifically, first, majority of the newly admitted students 90.7% (680) said their courses are very interesting. 84.4% (633) of the students also said they feel belong in the school. 80.5% (604) of students also indicate that their teachers always care about them. Also, 78.8% (591) of students always participate in class. 72.8% (546) of students agreed to have recreational

activities in school. 68.9% (517) of students said their classes are inclusive while 31.1% (233) disagreed. Similarly, 68.5% (514) of students agreed to always research in school while 31.5% (236) denied. 68.3% (512) of students indicate that their friends care about them while 36.7% (238) disagreed. Finally, 62.4% (468) of the students agreed to always go for counseling while 37.6% (282) denied.

Table 5

Counsellors Opinion on Academic Support to First Year Student to Facilitate Adjustment

Themes	Quotations
Orientation	<p>“Orientation on how to relate with friends, their needs, taking care of one’s health, CA papers and personal belongings”.</p> <p>‘I always give students guide and organise orientation meetings for first year students to facilitate their adjustment”.</p> <p>“I carry out orientation and go to classes to find out if the students are having social and academic problems so that we can solve them”.</p> <p>“I assist them in drawing reading timetable, learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills”.</p>
Counselling	<p>“Psychological support and talks on adjustment of fresh students within the University environment”.</p> <p>“Deliver information to students within the school on best practices in mindset and behaviour”.</p> <p>“Delivering school counselling programme based on data identifying students’ needs”.</p>
Environmental mastery	<p>“Help them to understand the environment, use library and phones to search for information on the internet”.</p> <p>“Helping them to master the academic environment proper”.</p>
Career planning	<p>“Assist students in career planning and future career related goals”.</p>

Based on counsellors’ opinion on academic support to first year students to facilitate their adjustment, many of the counsellors said they offer orientation services to the students as depicted in their statements “Orientation on how to relate with friends, their needs, taking care of one’s health, CA papers and personal belongings”, ‘I always give students guide and organise orientation meetings for first year students to facilitate their adjustment”. Furthermore, some of the counsellors said they offer counselling services to the students “Psychological support and talks on adjustment of fresh students within the University environment”. “Deliver information to students within the school on best practices in mindset and

behaviour”. In addition, some of the counsellors said they help the students to master their environment as depicted in their statements “Help them to understand the environment, use library and phones to search for information on the internet”, “Helping them to master the academic environment proper”. Finally, some of the counsellors of career planning to help the students adjust as they narrated “Assist students in career planning and future career related goals”.

Testing of Hypothesis One (Ho1): Academic support does not significantly influence the social adjustment of newly admitted students in Cameroon state Universities

Table 6:

Influence of Academic Support on Social Adjustment of Newly Admitted University Students

		Academic support	Social adjustment of newly admitted University students	Explanatory power of influence in terms of % (Cox and Snell)
Spearman's rho	r-value	1	.280**	
	p-value	.	.000	.591 (59.1%)
	N	750	750	

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistically, findings showed that academic support has a significant and positive influence on social adjustment of newly admitted University students (r-value 0.280\*\*, p-value < 0.001) and this influence is supported with an explanatory power of 59.1% (Cox and Snell= 0.591). The positivity of the influence implies that newly admitted University students are more likely to be socially adjusted when they received adequate academic support. Therefore, the hypothesis that states academic support significantly influences the social adjustment of newly admitted students in Cameroon state Universities was accepted.

## DISCUSSIONS

Findings showed that academic support has a significant and positive influence on social adjustment of newly admitted University students. The positivity of the influence implied that newly admitted University students are more likely to be socially adjusted when they received adequate academic support. The findings are in congruence with Brophy (2000) who opined that academic support increase the academic adjustment of students, particularly for students who may be at risk of diminished academic maladjustment.

Findings from students revealed that teachers always care about them making them to feel belong in school. This finding is in line with the view of Whitaker (2004), who says the main variable in the classroom is not the student, but the teacher. Great teachers have high expectations for their students, but even higher

expectations for themselves. These teachers recognize the importance of connecting with their students, that if they are unable to connect with them emotionally then influencing their minds may be impossible. Good teachers put snags in the river of children passing by, and over time, they redirect hundreds of lives. There is an innocence that conspires to hold humanity together. Teachers are the first and perhaps most important point of contact in a student's life.

Finding revealed that teachers make students feel more energetic to learn, make them laugh in class and feel relaxed which help to facilitate their social adjustment. This in line with Marzano and Marzano (2008) as they argued that positive classroom environment filled with love, laughter and relaxation will promote learning and social adjustment. They added that adolescents want to feel connected to people and to feel as though he or she deserves to be loved and respected. Many of the students, who are not doing well academically, are the same ones who have a poor relationship with their teachers. Typically, the more they fall behind academically, often, the more this relationship is weakened. If they are constantly reprimanded in class, the environment and the teacher-student relationship begin to hold negative associations. Students who perceived a more nurturing relationship with their teachers tended to have better attitudes towards academics and often did better than their peers who lacked the same support system. The more connected a child feels, the more they are willing to attempt tasks and to seek help when

necessary. The student who feels this sense of connectedness may want to maintain it or please the teacher by doing well in class.

Findings from students revealed that their courses are very interesting which make them to participate in the class. This is supported by Stewart (2008) who opined that interesting lessons provided to the students is very necessary for social adjustment and decision making. He equally argued that the teachers make their courses to be interesting and their attitude toward learners determine what students will achieve. Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel, and Coetsee, (2005) suggest that an effective organizational culture can enhance academic achievement and lead to reduced student drop out and failure rates, effective discipline, and regular attendance.

Based on the expectation of the students when they just came into the University, and in relation to how the University was when they first came, a good number of the students feel happy and good. To others, the place was stressful and some were scared and shy. Some feel like they are studying abroad. To some, the place was strange to them. Based on feelings when first came to the University, many of the feel excited because they have made a new step in their life. Some feel both excited and scared at the same time because the environment was new. Others were scared and nervous because they had no friends were ignorant about the University. This is in line with Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) as they argued that first students find it easy to adjust to or cope with the stressors associated with living and studying in a new environment, while others experience psychological distress.

Based on counsellors' opinion on academic support to first year students to facilitate their adjustment,

counsellors opined that they offer orientation services to the student which help them to relate with friends, their needs, taking care of their health, CA papers and personal belongings. They always organize orientation meetings for first year students to facilitate their adjustment. Some of the counsellors give psychological support and talks on adjustment of fresh students within the University environment. This is in line with Rawlings and Sue (2013) as they encouraged educators to incorporate counselling, psychosocial support and emotional intelligence into academic pedagogy in order to facilitate the first year students' social adjustment.

The finding is supported by Vincent Tinto's (1975) theory of institutional departure where he theorized that social and academic integration influence a student's social adjustment and commitment to school. For example, the greater the level of students' social and academic integration with the institution is, the greater the level of commitment. When students cope and adapt easily with others and their academic works, they are more likely to strive in the university. Conversely, the lower the level of social interaction and academic integration, is the less commitment to the institution. In the same vein, commitment to the institution and goal of achievement is directly linked to the decision to persist. Tinto postulates that both the academic support and social systems of an institution are equally influential in the persistence decision. Therefore, as students get positive encounters in both the formal and informal academic and social settings, their social adjustment is improved, which leads to the likelihood of retention.

## CONCLUSION

Students' early life experiences and academic support are important components of the adjustment process. Adjustment is a unique process and each student may



experience associated issues differently. Findings revealed that academic support significantly influence the social adjustment of newly admitted University students. The positivity of the influence implied that newly admitted University students are more likely to be socially adjusted when they have good academic support. Adjustment issues are common among first year students; the literature consistently indicates that first year university students underutilize mental health and counselling services.

Some students may experience transitional stress, psychological distress, and academic difficulties, protective factors such as their coping styles, including social support, social connections, self-efficacy, resilience and emotional maturity that can alleviate the stress associated with the experience of living and learning in a new environment. Universities are encouraged to integrate services or create program within the university that promotes wellness and that makes the transition less stressful. The students are encouraged to take advantage of programs offered by their university such as counseling services, mentorship and tutoring that promote a seamless transition.

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