Students' Perceptions of Campus Climate and Social Support to Adjustment to Education Colleges

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of campus climate and social support to adjustment to education colleges. Participants of the study consisted of 900 student teachers (450 males and 450 females) selected from Yankin, Hlegu, Taungoo, Mandalay and Monywa Education Colleges. To find out student teachers' perceptions of campus climate, perceived social support and students' adaptation to college, the University Environment Scale (UES) developed by Gloria and Kurpius (1996), Perceived Social Support (PSS) developed by Schneider and Ward (2003) and Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) by Baker and Siryk (1984) were used. Independent sample *t*-test, descriptive statistics, regression and correlation analysis were used for data analysis. In this study, all sub-scales of social support, perception of college environment and student adaptation to college were significantly correlated with one another. Backward multiple regression analyses revealed that the strongest predictors of student adaptation to college were affective perceived social support and perception of college environment.

Keywords: Transition, Campus Climate, Social Support, Perception, Adjustment to College

Introduction

As students enter the college, they are initially faced a number of issues, many of which are connected to feelings of alienation and loneness in their new environment. Students' academic interest, success or failure is not influenced by only individual intelligences or abilities, but also by situational and contextual factors (Goodenow, 1993). Social support and campus climate could help the students as an important element to adjust to college and academic achievement. Villanova and Bownas (1984) found

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that social support could help students to cope with everyday life stressor and lighten the burden of academic workload.

The development of students' adjustment is influenced by perceived social support and their campus climate. Lack of social support and negative perceptions of campus climate has been found to be one of the factors that lead to many problems among students. Therefore, social support and perceptions of campus climate is essential factor to overcome the difficulties in student life and adjustment to college.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the present study is to investigate students' perceptions of campus climate and social support to adjustment to education colleges.

Definitions of Key Terms

Transition: Transition refers to the period between separation from a known community of culture where norms, values and behavior are familiar and transition to a new culture where norms, values and behavior are unknown (Van Gennep, 1960).

Adjustment to College: Adjustment to college is defined successful adaptation to college as being socially integrated with other students, participating in campus activities, responding to academic requirements, and being attached and committed to the educational institution (Zea, Jarama & Bianchi, 1995).

Social Support: Social support can be defined as the experience being valued, respected, cared about, and loved by others who are present in one's life. It may come from different sources such as family, friends, teachers, community, or any social groups to which one is affiliated (Gurung, 2006).

Campus Climate: Campus climate can be defined as a multidimensional construct, subject to and shaped by the policies, practices, and behaviors of those within and external to colleges and universities, representing the attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations regarding issues of diversity (Hurtado, 1994).

Perception: Perception is the action of seeing and perceiving through the sensory organs. It is a process of perceiving, discriminating and transmitting stimuli from the surrounding through human sensory organs, interpret and store them in the brain. It can be in the form of image, imagination, thinking, opinion, idea or impression (Mok Soon Sang, 2003).

Review of Related Literature

College attendance is regarded as a very positive event with great opportunities for adolescent development. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) argued that for most students, the transition to university classroom requires [3]an adjustment of academic habits and expectations. The term adjustment is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. Good (1959) sated that adjustment is the process of finding and adopting modes of behavior suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. Students find that at university, competition is more acute, classes are larger, there is a lot of work, lecturers use different teaching styles, the volume and frequency of written work are higher and standards are higher. On the other hand, the student has to reconstruct his or her personal relations in a new environment and this often causes mental and physical distress (Tao et al., 2000). Students get anxious as they adjust to academic, social, personal and lifestyle challenges that the university presents.

Van Gennep (1960) argued that poor college adjustment correlates with poor academic performance, low graduation rates and poor success later in life. Bad adjustment with university life may force the student to leave the institution (Van Gennep, 1960).

In adjustment, the two crucial factors are the individual and the environment. Adhiambo (2011) further defined college or university adjustment in terms of college achievement which covered students' academic achievement and personal growth. Adjustment can occur in different domain: academic, social and emotional. There is a significant link between the quality of social support and adjustment during the transition and throughout the university year (Friedlandar et al., 2007). Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) observed that, personal adjustment and integration into social fabric of university environment play a role and is as important as academic factors throughout the students' life.

Social support is one of the most important protective factors for student adjustment to college (Solberg et al., 1994). Arslan (2009) also said that social support is important to gather information on how the students perceive the surrounding environment in order to assess the social support system.

Perceive social support is a person's perception of the availability of support from others (i.e., friends and family) and capture the complex nature of social support including both the history of the relationship with the individual who provided the supportive behavior and the environmental context (Schaefers et al., 1981). Tao and colleagues (2000) demonstrated that perceived global social support was related to academic, personal emotional, and social adjustment.

Social support included four types of support including family support, peer support, faculty support, and institutional support. Family is essential for the students to develop their social, emotional, educational and other development. In academic life, students may rely on their families for support if they cannot find support on campus. Peer support is sometime known as self-help, mutual aid or mutual support. Grant-Vallone and colleagues (2003-2004) found that peer support appeared to be more critical to college adjustment than parental support. Rodriguez et al. (2000) proposed that family support and friend support was equally important in determining psychological well-being and academic achievement of students. Institutional support included supportive relationships with university personnel as well as the atmosphere of the campus. There was a perception among the students that the faculty and staff at this university were friendlier. Martin and colleagues (1999) found that student perceptions of the university and faculty support predicted overall college adjustment.

Reevyl and Maslach (2001) found that individuals receiving more social support enjoy a higher degree of physical, mental, and social health and make a better adjustment to life challenges. Conversely, low levels of social support have been repeatedly linked to poor physical and mental health outcomes (Cohen et al., 2000). A high sense of social support, therefore, was related to a high level of adjustment to the social environment and social relationship on campus (Baker & Siryk, 1999). Therefore, social support from parents, faculty and peers is a vital role for the students to overcome the difficulties and to achieve the success for their life.

Campus climate has been linked to improve student behavior and academic achievement, student learning, student failure, student behavior and delinquency, absenteeism, student suspension and low college motivation (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Fiske (1988), Hurtado et al. (1996), Schlossberg (1981) and Schneider and Ward (2003) indicated that

campus climate, and generational status may be related to students' ability to adjust to campus. Hurtado et al.'s (1996) conclusions that university environment had a significant effect on institutional adjustment. Institutional type and institutional size were found to be related in some instances when combined with perceptions of campus climate or social support. Upcraft and Gardner (1989) found a significant relationship between student achievement and campus climate. Freiberg (1999) stated; "Unless students experience a positive and supportive climate, some may never achieve the most minimum standards or realize their full potential".

Perceptions of the campus climate of students can predict of students' adjustment to college (Baker & Siryk, 1999). Baker and Siryk (1999) suggested that if students in sense a negative perception of the campus climate, it may deter them from their sense of educational purpose, academic motivation, and efficacy in fulfilling their academic goals.

A high level of adjustment for students denotes a high sense of satisfaction with the institution as well as a stronger relationship with and connection to the university and a greater attachment to the institution. Social support and campus climate may predict higher levels of adjustment for the students. Thus, the results showed that adjustment was significantly related with perception of campus climate and social support.

Method and Procedure

A survey method was used in this study with quantitative perspective.

Participants

A total of 900 student teachers who are second year student teachers (450 males and 450 females) from Yankin, Hlegu, Taungoo, Mandalay and Monywa Education Colleges participated in this study.

Instruments

In this study, University Environment Scale (UES) developed by Gloria and Kurpius (1996) was used to measure the perceptions of campus climate of the student teachers. The UES is a 11-item instrument used to measure students' concerns for and perceptions of the college environment. Respondents used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Not at all to (7) Very true.

Then, Perceived Social Support (PSS) was measured using a 32-item questionnaire developed by Schneider and Ward (2003). The instrument included four subscales in order to assess students' perceived social support to adjustment to education colleges. Items 1-8 (8 items) are peer support scale, items 9-16 (8 items) are family support scale, items 17-25 (9 items) are faculty support and items 26-32 (7 items) are institutional support scale. The selected student teachers have to answer the questionnaire by seven-point Likert scale (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree).

To find out adjustment to college of the student teachers, Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) conducted by Baker and Siryk (1984) was used. SACQ contained total 22 items in which items 1-3 (3 items) are for social adjustment, items 4-11 (8 items) are for personal emotional adjustment, items 12-18 (7 items) are academic adjustment and items 19-22 (4 items) are for goal commitment institutional adjustment. The participants have to answer the questionnaire by seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree).

Procedure

Before conducting the field testing, pilot testing was done with a sample of 100 second year student teachers from Hlegu Education College in second week of December, 2017. The student teachers from Yankin, Taungoo, Mandalay and Monywa Education Colleges were distributed and collected the questionnaires in the third and fourth week of December, 2017.

Results and Findings

To investigate students' perceptions of campus climate and social support to adjustment to education colleges was carried out.

Table 1. Comparison of Student Teachers' Perceptions of College Environment by Gender

Perception of College Environment	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
	Male	450	55.17	9.25	-4.825***	898	0.000
	Female	450	58.11	9.03			

Note. ***mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level.

According to the above table, there was a significant difference at the perceptions of college environment between males and females. The mean score of perceptions of college environment of the female student teachers was slightly higher than that of male student teachers. It can be concluded that the female student teachers have a more positive perceptions on the campus climate than the male student teachers. Therefore, it can be interpreted that female students might well adjust in Education College more than male students.

Table 2. Results of Tukey HSD for Perceptions of College Environment by College

	(I) EC	(J) EC	Mean Differences (I-J)	p
College Environment Scale	YEC	MEC	2.740*	.025

Note: * mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

YEC=Yankin Education College,

MEC= Mandalay Education College

According to the table 2, there was a significant difference in perception of college environment between Education Colleges. Results revealed that perception of student teachers from YEC was significantly higher than that of student teachers from MEC in perception of college environment. It can be concluded that YEC could offer more services and support to the student teachers than that of student teachers from MEC. Additionally, those who attend YEC may have a positive affinity for the college upon entrance, making them more attachment and positive perception to the college. Schneider and Ward (2003) found that there was a relationship between perceptions of campus climate, social support and institutional type.

To explore the student teachers' perceived social support, descriptive analysis was conducted. The results finding can be seen in table.

Table 3. Analysis for Each Subscale of Perceived Social Support by Gender

Perceived Social Support	*t*	*df*	*p*	Mean	
				Male	Female
Peer Support	-5.132***	898	.000	42.06	43.79
Family Support	-8.744***	898	.000	44.75	48.59
Faculty Support	-5.749***	898	.000	44.03	46.48
Institutional Support	-5.321***	898	.000	36.16	38.41

Note: *** mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level.

According to the above table, there were significant differences in peer support, family support, faculty support and institutional support by gender at 0.001 level. The results showed that the mean scores of female students in social support subscales were higher than the mean scores of male students. It can be interpreted that females might rely on social support more than males to adjust to the college life. Female students were more vulnerable to cope with the problems than males. Without social support,

female students may have more difficulty maintaining a psychological well-being while learning in college (Pope et al., 2004).

Table 4. Results of Tukey HSD for Perceived Social Support by College

Subscales of Perceived Social Support	(I) EC	(J) EC	Mean Differences (I-J)	p
Family Support	HEC	MEC	2.975**	.003
	YEC	MEC	1.930*	.038
	TEC	MEC	2.335**	.006
Faculty Support	HEC	MEC	3.520***	.000
	YEC	MEC	3.225***	.000
	TEC	MEC	2.370**	.002
	MYEC	MEC	2.755***	.000
Institutional Support	YEC	HEC	2.180*	.043
	TEC	HEC	2.925**	.002
		MEC	1.830*	.035

Note: * mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

** mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

***mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level

HEC=Hlegu Education College, YEC=Yankin Education College,

TEC=Taungoo Education College, MYEC=Monywa Education

College, MEC=Mandalay Education College

According to the Table 4, the result revealed that there was no difference between education colleges in peer support. But, student

teachers' mean scores from HEC, YEC, TEC were higher than that of student teachers from MEC at the family support. Regarding the family support, there was no significant difference concerning mean scores between Mandalay and Monywa Education Colleges. The student teachers from HEC, YEC, TEC, MYEC were significantly higher than student teachers from MEC in the faculty support. And then, the results also showed that student teachers from YEC and TEC were higher than student teachers from HEC and MEC in the institutional support.

Table 5. Analysis for Student Adaptation to College by Gender

Subscales of Adaptation to Colleges	t	df	p	Mean	
				Male	Female
Social Adjustment	**-2.436***	898	**.000**	16.70	17.22
Personal Emotional Adjustment	.012	898	**.991**	29.52	29.51
Academic Adjustment	**-7.018*****	898	**.000**	28.58	31.71
Goal Commitment Institutional Adjustment	**-6.081*****	898	**.000**	33.56	35.42

Note: * mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

*** mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level.

The result of *t*-test showed that significant differences were found at the 0.001 level for the academic adjustment and goal commitment institutional adjustment by gender. It can be concluded that the female student teachers can be able to adjust on academic performance and goal commitment than the male student teachers. Moreover, there was a significant difference in social adjustment by gender at 0.05 level. Therefore, this result can be interpreted that female student teachers can be able to adjust on social relationships than male students.

Table 6. Results of Tukey HSD for Student Adaptation to College by College

Subscales of Adaptation to Colleges	(I) EC	(J) EC	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Social Adjustment	HEC	TEC	1.090*	.048
Personal Emotional Adjustment	HEC	MEC	4.375***	.000
	YEC	MEC	3.095**	.002
	MYEC	TEC	2.315*	.042
	MYEC	MEC	4.405***	.000
Academic Adjustment	HEC	TEC	2.740**	.008
	HEC	MEC	4.636***	.000
	YEC	MEC	3.475***	.000
	TEC	MEC	1.895*	.039
	MYEC	MEC	3.470***	.000
Goal Commitment Institutional Adjustment	HEC	MEC	2.120**	.002
	YEC	MEC	1.625**	.004

Note: * mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

   **mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level

   ***mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level

   HEC=Hlegu Education College, YEC=Yankin Education College,

   TEC=Taungoo Education College, MYEC=Monywa Education

   College, MEC=Mandalay Education College

There was a significant difference between HEC and TEC. The adjustment level of the students from HEC was higher than that from the students from TEC in social adjustment. It can be interpreted that the

student teachers from HEC sufficiently received social support from faculty and peer than the student teachers from TEC and the students from HEC students who sense a higher level of comfort from their peers will report higher levels of adjustment to the social environment and social relationships on campus. Wintre and Yaffe (2000) also concluded that higher levels of faculty support and peer support were related to higher levels of social adjustment. At the personal emotional adjustment, the adjustment level of the students from MEC was lower than HEC, YEC and MYEC and then MYEC was higher than TEC. It can be assumed that the student teachers from MEC who perceived a high level of incongruence between their personal beliefs and the values of the campus environment have lower personal emotional adjustment scores. Lower scores are often associated with greater emotional reliance on another person, fewer psychological coping resources, and lower levels of psychological well-being (Baker & Siryk, 1984). And then, the adjustment level of the students from MEC was lower than the students from HEC, YEC, TEC and MYEC in academic adjustment. It can be concluded that the students from MEC underrepresented in the academic setting, not satisfaction with academic environment and not sufficiently perceived social support from peer, faculty and institution than students from HEC, YEC, TEC and MYEC. The adjustment level of the students from HEC and YEC were higher than MEC in goal commitment institutional adjustment. It can be assumed that the students from HEC and YEC perceived more services and program, comfort and fit with other students, have positive perception on campus climate and received sufficient social support than the students from MEC.

Table 7. Correlations for Students' Perceptions of College Environment Social Support and Students' Adaptation to College

Variables	Perceptions of College Environment	Perceived Social Support	Student Adaptation to College
Perceptions of College Environment	1	**.663****	**.612****
Perceived Social Support		1	**.586****
Student Adaptation to College			1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

   According to the Table 7, the student teachers' perceptions of college environment, perceived social support and their adaptation to colleges are highly positively correlated with each other at 0.01level. It can be seen that perceptions of college environment was positively correlated with perceived social support (r=0.663, p<0.01). This indicates that students in this study reporting high sense of perception of college environment also demonstrates high level of perceived social support. Perception of college environment was positively correlated with student adaptation to college (r=612, p<0.01). So, the greater positive perception of college environment is, the higher student adaptation to college becomes. A further point is that perceived social support correlates significantly with the student adaptation to college (r=0.586, p<0.01). So it can be interpreted that if the students have sufficiently perceived social support, their sense of college connectedness and adaptation to college will heighten.

Conclusion

   The finding of the study indicated that the perceived social support was positively correlated with social adjustment, personal emotional adjustment, academic adjustment and goal commitment institutional adjustment. It can be concluded that students who have higher levels of perceived social support tend to well adjustment to their college. Perception of college environment of the students was positively correlated with perceived social support. More positive perceptions of the campus climate for the students were related to a higher adjustment score.

   The research finding indicates that there were significant differences in perceived social support by gender at 0.001 level. According to the finding, the female students received higher than the male students in all social support. It can be interpreted that female students might rely on social support more than male to adjust to the college life. Without social support, female students may have more difficulty maintaining a psychological well-being while learning in college (Pope et al., 2004).

   According to the ANOVA results showed that there were significant differences in family support and institutional support among the education colleges at 0.01 level. Again, in faculty support, a significant difference was found at 0.001 level. According to the finding, student teachers' mean scores from HEC, YEC, TEC were higher than that of student teachers from

MEC at the family support. The student teachers from HEC, YEC, TEC, MYEC were significantly higher than student teachers from MEC in the faculty support. And then, the results also showed that student teachers from YEC and TEC were higher than student teachers from HEC and MEC in the institutional support.

According to the results, it can be said that there were significant differences in personal emotional adjustment and academic adjustment level among the education colleges at 0.001 levels. Again, there were also significant differences in goal commitment institutional adjustment at 0.01 level. According to the results of Tukey, it can be interpreted that the adjustment level of the students from HEC was higher than that of the students from TEC in social adjustment. At the personal emotional adjustment, HEC, YEC and MYEC were higher than MEC and TEC. And then, the adjustment level of the students from MEC was lower than HEC, YEC, TEC and MYEC in academic adjustment. The adjustment level of the students from HEC and YEC were higher than MEC in goal commitment institutional adjustment.

According to the findings, it can be said that there were significant differences in perceptions of college environment by gender. It can be concluded that the female student were slightly higher than male students in perception of college environment. According to the results of ANOVA was showed there was a significant difference in perceptions of college environment by colleges at 0.05 level. So it was found that perceptions of students from YEC were significantly higher than that of students from MEC in college environment.

According to the findings, the student teachers' perceptions of college environment, perceived social support and their adaptation to colleges are highly positively correlated with each other at 0.01level. Therefore, in this study, student teachers' perceptions of college environment significantly predict the students' adaptation to college. The perceptions of the social support also predict students' adaptation to college. Similarly, perception of college environment of the students was influenced by perceived social support. So it can be interpreted that if the students have sufficiently perceived social support, their sense of college connectedness and adaptation to college will heighten.

The results showed that adjustment was significantly related with perceptions of campus climate and social support. Based on these results,

perception of campus climate and perceived social support were significant predictors in positive direction. Therefore, it can be interpreted that social support and campus climate was closely associated for the students with their adjustment to college.

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